Verena in the Midst

by

E. V. Lucas

Author of "The Vermilion Box," "Over Bemertons," etc., etc

VERENA
IN THE MIDST

E. V. LUCAS

Other Books of E. V. LUCAS

ENTERTAINMENTS

THE VERMILION BOX
LANDMARKS
LISTENER'S LURE
MR. INGLESIDE
OVER BEMERTON'S
LONDON LAVENDER

ESSAYS

ADVENTURES AND ENTHUSIASMS
CLOUD AND SILVER
A BOSWELL OF BAGHDAD
TWIXT EAGLE AND DOVE
THE PHANTOM JOURNAL
LOITERER'S HARVEST
ONE DAY AND ANOTHER
FIRESIDE AND SUNSHINE
CHARACTER AND COMEDY
OLD LAMPS FOR NEW

TRAVEL

A WANDERER IN VENICE
A WANDERER IN PARIS
A WANDERER IN LONDON
A WANDERER IN HOLLAND
A WANDERER IN FLORENCE
MORE WANDERINGS IN LONDON
HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN SUSSEX

BIOGRAPHY

THE LIFE OF CHARLES LAMB
A SWAN AND HER FRIENDS
THE BRITISH SCHOOL
THE HAMBLEDON MEN

ANTHOLOGIES

THE OPEN ROAD
THE FRIENDLY TOWN
HER INFINITE VARIETY
GOOD COMPANY
THE GENTLEST ART
THE SECOND POST
THE BEST OF LAMB
REMEMBER LOUVAIN

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

THE SLOWCOACH
ANNE'S TERRIBLE GOOD NATURE
A BOOK OF VERSES FOR CHILDREN
ANOTHER BOOK OF VERSES FOR CHILDREN
RUNAWAYS AND CASTAWAYS
FORGOTTEN STORIES OF LONG AGO
MORE FORGOTTEN STORIES
THE "ORIGINAL VERSES" OF ANN AND JANE TAYLOR

SELECTED WRITINGS

A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING
HARVEST HOME
VARIETY LANE
MIXED VINTAGES

EDITED WORKS

THE WORKS OF CHARLES AND MARY LAMB
THE HAUSFRAU RAMPANT

VERENA IN THE MIDST

A KIND OF A STORY

BY

E. V. LUCAS

AUTHOR OF "THE VERMILION BOX,"
"OVER BEMERTON'S," ETC.

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1920,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA BARBARA

TO
FRANCES
AND
SIDNEY
COLVIN

TO THE READER

THE correspondence from which the letters in this book have been selected passed (with the exception of the last) during 1919. The last is a little later.

Mr. Richard Haven, some of whose letters are to be found in a preceding volume, *The Vermilion Box*, is still a bachelor and still lives in Mills Buildings, Knightsbridge, but is doubtful if he can afford it much longer.

Miss Verena Raby, the centre of this epistolary circle, is one of Mr. Haven's oldest friends. Old Place, the ancestral home over which she now reigns, is near Kington in Herefordshire, on the borders of England and the Principality which provides us impartially with perplexities and saviours. Miss Raby is one of a family of nine, but none of the others neglect any opportunity of postponing letter-writing. Of these brothers and sisters, all save one—Lucilla, Nesta's mother—are living, or were living when these pages went to press.

Nesta Rossiter, who is managing Old Place during Miss Raby's illness, married Fred Rossiter, an amateur painter, and they have three children, Antoinette (or "Tony"), Lobbie and Cyril.

Emily Goodyer is the children's nurse. She is also the fiancée of Bert Urible, greengrocer, soldier and then greengrocer again.

Theodore Raby is Verena's brother and a widower with one daughter, Josey.

Walter Raby, another brother, is ranching in Texas.

Hazel Barrance, daughter of Clara Raby, is another of Miss Raby's nieces. She was a V.A.D. during the War, but has now returned to Kensington routine, in a not too congenial home. Her brother Roy also finds Peace heavy on his hands but has more chances for liberty and diversion, and grasps most of them.

Evangeline Barrance, a sister still at school, is one of the youngest editors in Europe.

Mr. Horace Mun-Brown, Miss Raby's nephew and a briefless barrister, lives in the Temple on a small income and a sanguine disposition.

Mr. Septimus Tribe, the husband of Verena's youngest sister, Letitia, and by some years her

senior, was at the Board of Trade, but is now in retirement at Tunbridge Wells.

Clemency Power is an Irish girl who managed to get out to France during the War, although under age, and was so happy and busy there that she abandoned idleness permanently. Her mother, a widow, the daughter of an Irish peer, lives with Clemency's two younger sisters near Kenmare. Patricia, aged nineteen, is the only one who comes into this correspondence.

Miss Louisa Parrish, who was at school with Verena and looks upon that accident as an indissoluble bond, lives frugally but with no loss of social position in her late father's house in a Berkshire village.

Nicholas Devose is a traveller and artist who came nearer marrying Verena Raby than any other man has done.

Bryan Field is a young doctor whose path crossed that of Clemency Power in France during the War.

Sir Smithfield Mark is one of the leading surgeons at Bart's.

Sinclair Ferguson is Miss Raby's doctor.

Lady Sandys is a neighbour of the Rossiters in Kent.

Vincent Frank is remaining in the R.A.F. although the War is over.

Mrs. Carlyon, whom we meet at once, only to lose her again, is a neighbour of Miss Raby at Kington.

E. V. L.

VERENA IN THE MIDST

VERENA IN THE MIDST

I

Rhoda Carlyon to Nesta Rossiter

[*Telegram*]

MISS RABY has had an accident and has asked for you. No immediate danger. Hope you can come quickly.

II

Rhoda Carlyon to Richard Haven

Dear Mr. Haven,—I am sorry to have rather bad news for you. My neighbour, Miss Raby, has had the misfortune to fall and hurt her spine, and Mr. Ferguson, our doctor, is afraid that she may have to lie up for some long time. She is not in much pain, but must be very quiet. She was

anxious that you should be told. It was fortunate that I was at home when the accident happened, as her maids are not good in emergencies. Mr. Ferguson, who is exceptionally capable for a country place, will call in a specialist, but I fear there is no doubt about the seriousness of the injury and that her recovery will be a long business. Miss Raby is very brave and even smiling over it, but for anyone so active and so much interested in the life around her it will be a trial. She is hoping for one of her nieces, Mrs. Rossiter, to come directly.—I am, yours sincerely,

RHODA CARLYON

III

RICHARD HAVEN TO VERENA RABY

DEAREST VERENA, your letter—or rather Mrs. Carlyon's, containing your bad news—gave me a shock. Do you really mean to say you will have to lie up for months—flat and helpless? This is terrible for you—and for us. Of course I shall come and see you as soon as may be; but it can't be yet. Why do you live so far away? And I will write, but if you cannot use your hands you

must get either Mrs. Carlyon or Nesta (if she is there) to answer a number of questions at once. (I am glad Nesta is coming.)

(a) Can you use your hands?
(b) Does it tire you too much to read?
(c) Have you much or any pain?
(d) What can I do for you first?
(e) Have you a library subscription?
(f) Is there anyone in the neighbourhood who can read aloud, endurably?
(g) (Don't worry: you are not to have the whole alphabet.) Do games of solitaire appeal to you?

I want you to think of me as your Universal Provider and to express your needs without any reserve. For what else am I useful? Consider me, in short, as a Callisthenes whose motto is "Deeds not Words."—Yours, R. H.

P.S.—(h) Have you a gramophone? And if not, does the idea of a gramophone repel or attract?

P.S. 2.—DEAREST VERENA, I hate it that you should be ill—you who live normally a

hundred minutes to the hour. But if there is no heritage of weakness you will be all the better for the enforced rest. That I intend to think and believe.

P.S. 3.—Yours, again and always, R. H.

IV

From the "Herefordshire Post"

We regret to state that Miss Verena Raby of Old Place, Kington, who is so well known as the Lady Bountiful of the neighbourhood, has met with a serious accident through falling on the ice and sustained spinal injuries which may confine her to her room for several months. Every one will wish her a speedy recovery.

V

Nesta Rossiter to Richard Haven

Dear "Uncle" Richard,—I got here this afternoon and found Aunt Verena very still and white and pathetic, but the doctor is cheerful and a London swell, a friend of his—Sir Smithfield Mark—is expected to-morrow. Mrs. Carlyon,

who lives in that big house near the church, on the Llandridnod road, has been kindness itself. I have come prepared to stay for a considerable time. Fred has promised not to go away just yet and fortunately we have a very good nurse. A little later perhaps Lobbie, my second, will come to me here; it depends on how quiet Aunt Verena has to be kept.

Now for the answers to your questions, which Mrs. Carlyon has handed over to me:—

(a) She can use her hands but is not permitted to do anything tiring, such as writing.

(b) She has to lie too flat to be able to hold a book with any comfort for more than a very short while.

(c) She is not in serious pain.

(d) What she most wants is letters from her friends, and you, I imagine, in particular.

(e) She has a library subscription, but would like to know what books are cheerful. She does not want to lie awake thinking about other people's frustrated lives.

She is rather tired of novels with the Café Royal in them.

(f) I have done my best for years to learn to read aloud, for the sake of the children, but most of the sentences end in a yawn. I wonder why it makes one so sleepy.

(g) This is really most important. Aunt Verena is devoted to Solitaire and thinks that a little later it might help her. But in her horizontal position it is, of course, impossible to use a table. What we have been wondering is whether it would be possible to get an arrangement by which it could be played on a more or less vertical board. Do you think this could be managed? I have been thinking about it and can suggest only long spikes and holes in the cards so that they could be hung on. Do you know anyone who could carry out such a scheme? She is going along very satisfactorily and is a perfect patient. She tells me to give you her

love and thank you for all your suggestions.—Yours sincerely,

NESTA ROSSITER

VI

HAZEL BARRANCE TO VERENA RABY

DEAREST AUNT VERENA,—We are so sorry to hear about your accident, and so glad that some of the reports were exaggerated. Father says that nothing would give him such joy as to go to bed for a year, and then perhaps he might lose a few of his seventeen permanent colds; but he sends his love too. There is no news; the chief is that Roy has been demobbed and is wondering what his future is to be. His present is largely Jazz and avoiding father. The lucky boy is staying with some rich friends in Kensington. I am glad that Nesta is with you. Mother has given up Christian Science in favour of what father calls Unchristian Séance.

It's an awful thing to say, but I often regret the loss of the War. Not because I was a profiteer, but because I then had something to do and some fun with it. But now?—Your loving

HAZEL

VII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear, of course I will write. If I were not tied to London just now by office work I should take rooms near you and do my best to spoil you. But that cannot be. Instead I will send you a letter as often as possible. In fact, I wouldn't mind, if it would really give you any satisfaction, promising to write every day. *Nulla dies sine epistola*—however short. Shall I? I never made such an undertaking before in my life.

As to books—when I am ill I am like the man who when a new one came out read an old one—Dr. Johnson or Hazlitt or Mr. Birrell—and therefore I am a bad counsellor. Were I to have a nice luxurious little illness at this moment I should take with me to the nursing home *Emma* and *Mansfield Park;* but they are men's books far more than women's. I should also put into practice a project I have long had in mind—the attempted re-reading of certain favourites of my schooldays, to see if they will stand the test.

Probably not. These include *Midshipman Easy*, *Zanoni*, *Kenelm Chillingly* and, above all, *Moby Dick;* but I doubt if any of these are in Miss Raby's line. Nor is, I am afraid, my glorious new friend, O. Henry. In default of a better I send by parcel post the old 6-volume edition of Fanny Burney's *Diary*.

Picture me hunting about for a Reader. Surely among all the demobilised young women who are said to be pining for a job I can find one! Don't be frightened—she shall not be too startlingly from one of the great tea-drinking departments of the Government—but I can't guarantee that her skirts will be below her knees. There are no long skirts left in London to-day, and no stockings that are not silk. I am not an observant person, but I have noticed that; I have noticed also that the silk does not always go the whole way. But perhaps among all your vast array of relations you know of a nice girl. If so, say so and I will not pursue the chase, but at the moment more than one agency is being busy about it. "Must have a pleasant voice and be able to keep it up for an hour without one gape"—that is what I tell them.

I must now stop or your poor arms will be tired with holding this up. Don't forget that I want to know what Sir Smithfield Mark says. Apropos of doctors, I met old Beamish at the club to-day, very cock-a-hoop as he was just off to North Berwick, on his doctor's advice, and without Mrs. B. He said with a wink that every man should have three doctors, carefully selected, to consult with discretion: one, when things were slackening domestically, to assure his wife that he must be fed up—better and more nourishing food, oysters and so forth; one when he was bored with town, to assure his wife that he is badly in need of a change and ought to go off on a little holiday at once, alone; and one to look after him when he is really ill. R. H.

VIII

Richard Haven to Rhoda Carlyon

Dear Mrs. Carlyon, we are all very grateful to you for being such a good Samaritan to our dear Verena. The word neighbour henceforward will have a new meaning for me; but why we should naturally be amiably disposed to people

because they cultivate the normally objectionable practice of living near or next door to us I never understood. You, however, have behaved so nobly that I shall now think of neighbours as being human too,—I am, yours sincerely,

RICHARD HAVEN

IX

SEPTIMUS TRIBE TO VERENA RABY

DEAR SISTER,—We are gravely disturbed by the news of your accident and trust that recovery will be swift and sure, although injury to the spine is often slow in healing and not infrequently leaves permanent weakness. You are, however, normally strong, much stronger than my poor Letitia, who seems to me to become more fragile every day. Strange that two sisters should be so different.

I shall be glad to be informed if there is anything that I can do to alleviate your mind at this season. Since we have had no details of your illness nor are acquainted with your medical man, it is possible that I may be suggesting a gravity which the case does not possess; but from what I

know of spinal troubles, I think that if you have not yet considered the drawing-up of your will you ought to do so. Most probably you have, for you have always been thoughtful, but even the most complete will is liable to second and third thoughts, which necessitate codicils. It occurs to me that the presence of a man of affairs, such as myself, might be of use to you while you perform this delicate task, and it is, of course, more suitable for one who is allied to you through kin to stand beside your bed than for a stranger. I have stood beside too many for you to feel any embarrassment. I have also acted as Executor and Trustee on several occasions; in fact, few men can have had more experience than I in giving counsel as to wise benefactions.

With loving thoughts, in which Letitia would, I am sure, join me, were she not out purchasing our necessarily frugal dinner,—I am, your affectionate brother-in-law, SEPTIMUS TRIBE

X

Richard Haven to Nesta Rossiter

Dear Nesta, how odd things are! Here have you been my honorary niece for years and years, and we have hardly exchanged a word, and now, all owing to a piece of slippery ice, I am reeling out correspondence. But how wrong that it should have needed such a lamentable form of provocation!

You must think of me now as in constant consultation with card-sharpers and carpenters, with a view to solving the great Solitaire-board problem. If it comes out, thousands of invalids, and a few lazy folk into the bargain, will bless the names of Raby and Rossiter, not altogether, I hope, forgetting that of Haven; for all of us at times have wished for the possibility of playing card games while reclining in comfort on a sofa. There is a thing called a card index, the maintaining of which seems to have been the principal task of the female war-winners in the various Government Departments, and it is upon the same principle (as you have already suggested)

that our vertical or sloping Solitaire table must be made. Meanwhile tell me if you have one of those invalid tables that come from Bond Street and can be insinuated into the patient's zone with such ease. If not I shall send you one.

I ran into one of your kith and kin, Horace Mun-Brown, to-day and told him the news, so Verena may expect trouble. I had told him before I realized what a bloomer I was committing. But that is life! The always wise communicate no news.—Yours, R. H.

P.S.—You, as a parent, will like the small schoolboy's letter home which one of the evening papers quotes to-day:—

My Dear Father and Mother,—Do you know that salt is made of two deadly poisons?—Your loving son, John

XI

Antoinette Rossiter to her Mother

Dearest Mummie,—I hope you are quite well. I have a cold. Daddy tells me to tell

you that if you don't come home soon he will take another lady in wholly wedlock. So please come soon because we have decided we couldn't endure her. I send you a thousand kisses.—Your loving

TONY

x x x x x x x x

XII

NESTA ROSSITER TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR "UNCLE" RICHARD,—Aunt Verena asks me to tell you that the specialist is very hopeful that she may be quite as strong and active as ever, but it will be a long business. Injuries to the spine are, however, very dangerous things, and there can be no certainty yet. Directly she can, she is going to write to you with her own hand. You are to be the first. Meanwhile she says that your daily letters are a great joy, but you must not hesitate to break the custom if it is ever at all troublesome.—Yours sincerely,

NESTA

XIII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

[*Telegram*]

Three and thirty cheers for the specialist.

R. H.

XIV

Hazel Barrance to Verena Raby

Dearest Aunt Verena,—I hope you are really better, or—if that is too much to hope yet —that you are going on all right. As soon as the Doctor says so, I am coming to peep at you.

We are living in a state of great excitement because Mother's old friend Mrs. Blundry is here for a few days and she talks of nothing but spiritualism. You know she lost her son Savile in the War—or, to use her own word, she "gave" him—and every night she gets out the paraphernalia of communication and has conversations with him. I used to think of death with terror—and indeed I do now, of my own—but the late Savile Blundry is transforming us all into frivo-

lous heartless creatures! From his mother's report of what he says, the grave has taught him nothing, and most of his remarks are only to the effect that it's "jolly decent over there."

Father is furious about it all and says that the duty of the dead is to be dead: but of course he can't be brutal like that to Mrs. Blundry. The fact, however, remains that she sees far more of her Savile now than she ever did when he was alive. Of course, if talking to the boy, or thinking she does so, brings any comfort, one should be glad of it—and there seem to be lots of people getting such comfort, or groping after such comfort, all over the world—but really, dead people do seem to have so little to say. When it comes to that, so do live people.

We have already had one real séance here, when father was out, and wonderful results were said to be obtained, but to my naughty sceptical mind they weren't of any interest whatever. After a number of false starts and accusations of undue control, and so forth, we got a name spelt out which with a little lenience could be translated into Cyrus Bowditch-Kemp by one of the women present, who, when she was a girl, had known a

man of that name who died in Rangoon twenty years ago. This was, of course, frightfully thrilling. Then he was asked if he had a message for any member of the company and he said "Yes" and this was the message: "Wind in the daffodils"; and the woman nearly fainted when she remembered that one spring afternoon when Bowditch-Kemp was calling, there was a gale which swayed the daffodils at the edge of the lawn. That was all, but it was considered to be marvellous and to prove that Mr. Bowditch-Kemp was now the woman's "watcher," as they are called.

I hope you are not shocked: but you said you wanted to know all that we were doing. People take this new spiritualism so differently; and of course, as I said, if it is a comfort one is only too glad, but it can be a kind of drug too, and there is no doubt that it has made things very easy for too many charlatans.—Your loving HAZEL

XV

Evangeline Barrance to Verena Raby

Dear Aunt Verena,—I was awfully sorry to hear about your accident. The French mistress has had one too, she went to London and was knocked down by a taxi and has been in bed ever since. We were glad about her, but I am sorry about you. It will be horrid not to see you at Christmas. I am going to prepare a great surprise to cheer you while you are ill but I mustn't tell you any more about it now as it is a terrific secret. Miss Arnott is reading *Nicholas Nickleby* to us, it is very nice. I like John Browdie, don't you? But I think the actors are the best, Mr. Folair and Mr. Lenville and the Infant Phenomenon. We acted *The Tempest* the other day, I was Ariel. It isn't fair in a charade, is it, to divide a word like "Shadow" into "shay" and "dough." It ought to be "shad" and "owe" or "Oh!" oughtn't it? Do answer this, because I want to confound some of the other girls. I will get the surprise ready as soon as possible, but

there are others in it too and we must have time. —I am, your affectionate niece, EVANGELINE

P.S.—Of course if you are not well enough to write, you mustn't bother about shadow. I can ask some one else.

XVI

HORACE MUN-BROWN TO VERENA RABY

DEAR AUNT VERENA,—I met Haven by chance the other morning and heard of your accident. I am more than sorry, but I think I have a means both of helping you to pass some of the weary time and also, if you are so disposed, of making good use of some of your superfluous income, of which I have so often written to you. It is monstrous, especially now, when the world is trying to recover from the paralysis of the War, that there should be any dormant bank balances, and, except for medical attendance and nursing, you will, I imagine, be spending less than usual.

To be brief, I have now perfected a piece of household furniture which cannot fail to make its way if it is set properly on the market. This is a

combination clothes-horse, screen, step-ladder and holder for what the French, who can be so clever with names, call a *serviette sans fin;* surely a more picturesque phrase than "circular towel." My invention is intended primarily for the kitchen, but, being on casters, it can easily be moved elsewhere. I feel sure that never before can one and the same article have been used for drying clothes, keeping out a draught, and in hanging pictures: and small houses must find it invaluable. The carpenter has carried out my idea with great skill and the model is here for anyone to see. I am enclosing a photograph, with dimensions.

All that is needed is a small sum sufficient to manufacture a thousand or so and to pay the patent-fee. We can then see how it goes and arrange for further supplies. I expect it to be a little gold-mine both for the inventor and for the fortunate capitalist. I am giving you, dear Aunt Verena, the first chance. A sum of £500 should be sufficient to start with.

So much for the business side.

Now for the amusement. A good catchy name is needed for it, but I have not yet thought of one

that wholly pleases me. The name should cover all its many functions and yet be short and snappy. I thought of "Steppo," but that disregards the clothes-horse and screen; or "Klowscrene," but that takes no note of the ladder. It occurred to me that you might find entertainment on your bed of sickness (which I trust you are soon to leave) in puzzling out something suitable.

You must not think of me as for one moment wanting something for nothing. I should never do that. All I propose is an alliance between my restless brains and your dormant bank balance which might be profitable to both of us.

Again wishing you a speedy recovery, I am, yours sincerely, HORACE

P.S.—I suppose it would hardly do to call it "The Angel in the House"? Not enough people know the phrase, and admirers of Coventry Patmore might be shocked.

XVII

Roy Barrance to Verena Raby

Dear Aunt Verena,—I am most awfully sorry to hear from Hazel about your accident. I hope it's only a blighty and that you will soon be fit again. As I am a great believer in good news as a buck-me-up, I hasten to tell you before anyone else that I am engaged to be married. Every one has always said that I should be all the better for settling down, and really with such a pet as Trixie I am sure they are right. I have not known her very long—we met at a dance at Prince's—but there are some people that you feel in a minute or so you have known all your life, and she is one of them. If you were not so ill I should bring her to see you at once.

She has fair hair, bobbed, and her father is a swell in the India Office. I have not met either him or her mother yet, but Trixie is to let me know directly a favourable opportunity occurs and then I shall butt in. I rather dread the interview, as Mr. Parkinson—that's her father's name—is said to be dashed peppery and to have set his

heart on her marrying coin; but I daresay I shall pull myself together and play the game. Meanwhile Trixie wants to keep the engagement a secret; and except for two or three pals you are the only person I have told. I haven't even told Hazel.

I ought to tell you that she can drive a car and knows all about them, so she ought to be really a helpmate, as all wives should be, don't you think? She is nearly eighteen and as I am nearly twenty it is splendid. I have always believed that husbands ought to be older than their wives. It gives them authority. We are thinking of taking our honeymoon in a two-seater on which I have had my eye for some time; but it is rather costly. Everything costs such a lot nowadays. Trixie says she finds me such a relief after so many soldiers. You see, having been in the Army such a short time, I am almost, she says, a civilian; really her first civilian friend; but of course if the War hadn't stopped I should still be a soldier too.—Your sincere nephew, Roy

P.S.—I'm awfully sorry about your being seedy. There's nothing like keeping fit and I

was never so full of beans myself. Get well soon. Cheerio!

XVIII

EVANGELINE BARRANCE TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR MR. HAVEN,—Will you please be very kind and write something for a little paper which I am editing at school for Aunt Verena to read while she is so ill. You are so clever. Something funny if you can, but, if not, something readable. The paper is to be called *The Beguiler; or, The Invalid's Friend*.—Yours affectionately,

EVANGELINE BARRANCE

XIX

HORACE MUN-BROWN TO VERENA RABY

DEAR AUNT,—Just a line to say that I have hit on what I think is a perfect name for my invention, so do not trouble your brains any more. "The Housewife's Ally."—Yours sincerely,

HORACE MUN-BROWN

XX

Richard Haven to Evangeline Barrance

Dear Evangeline (what a long name!), I am so busy in trying to be a beguiler to your Aunt Verena, on my own account, that I don't think I shall be able to contribute to your magazine; but I wish it very well and I shall try to collect something for you from a literary friend here and there. Being funny is too difficult for me anyway.—Yours sincerely,

Richard Haven

XXI

Septimus Tribe to Verena Raby

Dear Sister,—Letitia and I were distressed by the tone of Nesta's reply to my offer of a friendly advisory visit. It was never in my mind to supplant your lawyer, but merely to assist you in preparing for him. Friendly as family lawyers can become, one must always remember that they are a race apart, members of a secret society, largely inimical in their attitude to amateur coun-

sellors outside their mystery. But on this subject I shall say no more.

Letitia is, I regret to state, in a poorer condition of health than usual, due not a little to the need for certain luxuries with which, to my constant regret, I am unable to provide her, not the least of which is some sound invigorating wine such as our medical man recommends. In default of champagne, which is light and easily digested, she has to take stout, which, poor girl, lies heavily on her stomach. But these are not matters on which to discourse to one in affliction, and I apologise. Let me repeat that if in any way I can be of service to you in your helplessness I shall be only too ready.—I remain, your affectionate brother-in-law, SEPTIMUS TRIBE

XXII

HORACE MUN-BROWN TO VERENA RABY

DEAR AUNT,—I am afraid I was over-sanguine about the name for my invention. I showed it to a friend, a very capable man at the Bar, and to my astonishment he pronounced "Ally" not as if it were the word signifying helper (as I had

intended) but as though it were a diminutive of Alexander or Alfred, bringing to mind, most unsuitably, the vulgar paper *Ally Sloper*. Such a misconception, in a man of his ability, would mean that far too many people would make a similar mistake, so we must start again.—I am, yours sincerely, HORACE MUN-BROWN

XXIII

NESTA ROSSITER TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR "UNCLE" RICHARD.—The news here is good, I think, were it not that Aunt Verena has great difficulty in sleeping. She worries a good deal over her inactivity, and her burdensomeness (as she calls it) to others. She does not want to take drugs, nor do the doctors recommend them if they can be avoided. Our nurse is very good and attentive, but not much of a companion in the small hours. Have you any suggestions?—I am, yours sincerely, NESTA ROSSITER

XXIV

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear, I'm sorry about your sleeping so badly. All I can do is to pass on to you my own remedy, which is to repeat poetry to myself. It is better than counting sheep and all that kind of thing.

"But suppose I don't know any poetry?"

Well, of course, you do; but there is no harm in learning more, and especially so if, in order not to tire you in the wrong way, it is all very short, never more than eight lines. The epigrammatic things that are like miniatures in painting. What do you think of that? Here is a quatrain that touches immediately on your case:—

> Invoking life, I feel the surging tide
> Of countless wants ordained to be denied;
> Invoking sleep, I feel the hastening stream
> Of minor wants merged in a want supreme.

You see, I have already begun to collect these little jewels, and, difficult as it is to find perfection (even Landor is often disappointing), I am in great hopes of getting together a really beauti-

ful necklace of them, and then perhaps we will print them privately in a little book for the weary and the wakeful and the elect. You might even learn Omar: say, two quatrains a day. It's the loveliest melancholy stuff and can't do you any harm, because you have your belief in the goodness of things all fixed and unshakeable, and you couldn't get at the red wine if you wanted to. If you haven't an *Omar* I shall send you one.

> Ah, Love! could'st thou and I with Fate conspire
> To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
> Would we not shatter it to bits—and then
> Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's desire!

Wouldn't we just? But then you don't think the scheme as sorry as I often am forced to.

R. H.

XXV

Hazel Barrance to Verena Raby

Dearest Aunt Verena,—I do hope you are getting stronger. We are all excited about the vertical Solitaire table and I long to see it. One odd and unexpected effect of your illness is to keep Evangeline quiet and busy. She comes

home from school now full of importance and spends hours with her pen. The result, as I think she has told you, is to be a surprise for you. I wish I could do something to help you, but can suggest nothing. Knitting was my only accomplishment and I'm sure you are not short of woollies. Having ordered the day's food, I have now nothing to do but periodically to eat it, and to go out of my way to be more than amiable to the maids for fear of offending and losing them. You have no notion—you with your divine permanent staff—of the volcanoes we live on here and our constant terror of receiving notice. And this family in particular, because father makes no effort to control his language (but then no one does any more, and if "damn" were a word that infants could lisp they would lisp it—but servants don't like it), and mother *will* give us the results of séances, which again servants don't like or quite understand. Their idea of the dead is something to be put tidily away in a cemetery and visited on Sunday afternoons; not talkative spirits full of messages.

The more I go on in this aimless way the more I want to break loose and live alone without meals

and really do something. I was useful during the War and now I'm a machine. My only excitement—and a very doubtful one—is the refusal of dear cousin Horace, who proposes to me every other week.—Your loving HAZEL.

P.S.—Poor Fritz has had to be gently brought to his end. We have buried him next to Tiger and father has had the stone engraved with the words:—

HERE LIES
FRITZ THE DACHSHUND
WHO
(ALTHOUGH A GERMAN)
WAS
THE TRUEST FRIEND
AN ENGLISH FAMILY
EVER HAD
1919

XXVI

Louisa Parrish to Verena Raby

My Dear Verena,—I have only just heard of your accident and cannot understand why you did not let me know sooner. But perhaps, poor thing, you can't write. I heard it through the Hothams, who had been told by Pauline Bankes. Still even if you can't write yourself you must have some one there who can. Dictating is not an easy thing, I know, but even a postcard would have been better than nothing, and then I would have written at once to cheer you up. But if you do send a postcard, you will be careful, won't you, not to put anything very private on it, as they are all read here. It was how the village heard of poor Colonel Onslow's daughter's elopement. No doubt you were too ill to think of all your friends, and yet in the night, when one thinks of so much, I wonder my name didn't occur to you.

Writing letters is no hardship to me, as it is to so many people. My brother John, for instance, can't bring himself to put pen to paper at all, and

his study is always littered up with unanswered things. It is very odd, I always think, that the son of so methodical a man as father was should be so careless, but I expect it is a throwback or comes from mother's side. I am much more like father in so many ways, as well as having the Parrish nose and the ears set so far forward, while John and the others favour the Pegrams.

You must let me know if there is anything I can do for you besides writing now and then. Of course, if you were able to knit it would be better, although there is no one to knit for now. All the girls that I see knitting are working only for themselves—those jumpers they wear without corsets, so very indelicate, I think, especially when the bust is at all full. It is all so different from the War, when people were really unselfish. As long as I can remember, I, personally, have knitted for others; not that I want to take credit for it, but it is nice to be able to be of service. When I was a child it was mittens for the gardener and the coachman or else those poor Deep Sea Fishermen.

I suppose you have all the books you want. You have always been so well provided for, but

there's a little comforting bedside volume by Frances Ridley Havergal which I am sending in case you should want anything of that sort. It has always helped me, and the other day, after so many years, I read *Queechy* again and found it quite exciting, so I am putting that in too. Many of the modern books are so *outré*.

My rheumatism has been rather worse lately, but I mustn't tell you things like that when you are so ill yourself. I should like to know what your doctor says about you. There was a poor lady here who slipped and fell and hurt her back, very much in the same way, I should imagine, and she lived only a few hours. And dear old Sir Benjamin Pike, my father's friend and fellow magistrate, came to his end in the same way, through a banana skin. I am sure the regulations about throwing banana and orange skins away in the streets should be more strict. In my childhood we never saw bananas at all, and now they are everywhere. How odd it is that fashions in fruit should change as well as fashions in bodies and in dress, although I for one am against so much change in dress and think the advertisements in the weekly papers are dreadful in their

incitement to women to spend money, especially now when the Prime Minister tells us we should all save, and I am sure he is right. And the money people gave for pearls too, at the Red Cross sale! Perfectly marvellous where it all comes from, and how different we all are! Those millionaires buying pearls for their wives, and me here quite happy with the mosaic brooch my father brought me from Venice and the agate clasp which belonged to dear mother.

I must stop now or I shall miss the post.—Always your loving friend, LOUISA

XXVII

RICHARD HAVEN TO VERENA RABY

MY DEAR, how odd it is that even the sweetest-natured men, when asked for a fairy tale for the young, tend to satire. Pure fancy—comic invention with no *arrière pensée*—seems to be the most evasive medium. That mathematical genius, W. K. Clifford, could do the genuine thing without one drop of the gall of sophistication, and so, of course, could Lewis Carroll, and Burne-Jones in his letters. But when I asked my old friend,

George Demain, for something amusing and suitable for a children's amateur magazine, look at what he sent! I enclose the original, which please return. As it is no part of my scheme of life to teach cynicism, I am withholding it from the fledgling editors. I don't mind meeting cynics (although it is always best that there should be but one in any company) but I don't intend consciously to make any.

One of the extraordinary things of the moment is how little some men who went through the War were changed by it all. In fact, it comes to this, that the War could deal only with what a man had: it could not create brains or feelings. The people who talk about it as a purge, an educator, as discipline and so forth, are saying what they thought it ought to have been, rather than what it was. There are clerks in my office who enlisted and fought and even killed men, and have now returned to be clerks again, with perfect resignation, and with no outward sign of development, except that they do their work with less care.

I asked one of them what he thought of France and the French. He had been right through

the War and had come, for the first time in his life, into relations with the French under every kind of emotional stress. He ought to have had numbers of stories to tell and national distinctions to draw. All he said was—"Funny how far up from the railway platform their trains are!"

I hope all goes as well with you as it can.

R. H.

[*Enclosure*]

MOTIVES

Once upon a time there was a King who had never done anything except make laws and draw his salary, and when he was getting well on in years he began to wonder if his people really loved him. He might never have discovered the answer had not a neighbouring country declared war against him and threatened to invade his territory; for "Now," said the old King, "we will probe at last into this question of devotion."

He immediately issued a proclamation that the country was in danger and that all who wished to fight could do so but there would be no compulsion.

So the war began and all the men of the country flocked to the colours and there was great excitement.

At the end of a year the army of the old King had conquered and peace was proclaimed.

The day that the troops returned was a great holiday. The streets were gay with flags and banners, and every one came out to welcome the victors. That night the old King, dressed as a plain citizen, slipped through his palace gates and mingled with the crowd. He saw the illuminations and heard with emotion the joyous songs and cries of exultation.

Overcome by the noise and rejoicing he turned down a quiet street and presently he came on a woman weeping in a doorway. He asked the cause of her grief and she told him that her husband had been slain in battle.

"Ah," said the old King, "I am truly sorry to hear that, but, after all, there is a consolation in knowing that he died fighting for his King."

"I am not so sure," replied the sorrowing widow. "We had a quarrel and he went and joined the army to spite me."

Farther on the King met a poor old man bowed

with grief and sighing deeply as he leaned on his staff.

"How is this, old man?" cried the King. "Why do you sorrow when so many are gay?"

"Alas," groaned the other, "I have just heard that my son was killed in this horrible war."

"You have cause for sorrow, my friend," said the old King sympathetically, "but remember he fell in a good cause. He died for his King."

"Perhaps he did," replied the poor old man. "But he didn't say anything about that when he marched off. He didn't want to go, as a matter of fact. Not a bit. But every one else was going and he was afraid of being thought a coward."

At the next corner the old King saw a soldier, one of the victors. He was lame and haggard and worn and was leaning against a wall to rest.

"Ah!" cried the old King. "You have been wounded, my young hero?"

The soldier nodded and looked bored.

"Never mind, my lad," said the old King, patting him on the shoulder. "We are all proud of you—and remember, you risked your life in honour of your King!"

The soldier turned his tired eyes on him and a

stiff smile made his mouth crooked. "I suppose that was it," he said wearily. "I *had* thought that I joined up to see a bit of life and have the girls look at me, but possibly you are right. I expect it was the King's honour I was thinking of."

So the King returned thoughtfully to his palace, and as he entered the great hall the musicians began playing "God keep the King." Then all the courtiers who were to receive their share of the indemnity claimed from the defeated enemy, and all the commanders who were to receive titles and honours and large estates, cried out with one voice "God keep the King!" so that the people out in the streets heard it and joined in the shout as if they meant it.

And then the old King went to bed.

XXVIII

Horace Mun-Brown to Verena Raby

My Dear Aunt,—I am surprised to hear from Nesta Rossiter that my invention does not strike you more favourably. I felt sure that you would like to invest a little in it and at the same time

encourage me. But at the moment I am so busy with a bigger and vastly more attractive project that I am not so disappointed as I might have been. This new project is the kind of thing which I am sure will interest you too, for it involves the pleasure of a vast number of people. Briefly, I want to open a Picture Palace in the heart of the City. As you probably know, the part of London which is called the City is given up exclusively to business and eating-houses. But there are thousands—almost millions—of men and youths and girls who would rather eat their lunch in a Picture Palace than in a restaurant, and see at the same time a drama which might entertain, instruct, amuse, or quicken their emotions. This means crowded houses from say 12.15 to 2.30, the audience constantly changing as their time was up. Then there are also the employers—the stock-brokers and merchants—who might like to break the monotony of routine by seeing the pictures for an hour at any time, and then there are also errand boys who ought to be elsewhere. And we can add to these the number of strangers calling in the City who have nothing to do when their business is done. I

think you will agree with me that this is a really good scheme.

Land is of course expensive, but I am writing to three or four of the most suitably situated churches suggesting the possibility of acquiring their sites and rebuilding them where they are more needed. The proposal may sound very revolutionary to you, but my experience is that the more revolutionary a thing is the more likely it is to happen. Besides, it is not so revolutionary as it appears, for these churches are practically obsolete and I have no doubt whatever that the vicars would welcome a change.

I hope you are steadily improving. As a good name for the City Man's Cinema will be an advantage, perhaps you would like to be thinking of one.—Yours sincerely,

HORACE MUN-BROWN.

XXIX

RICHARD HAVEN TO VERENA RABY

DEAR VERENA, I am finding, to my horror, that the poets when at their briefest are usually concerned with mortality: and not necessarily

because the space on a tombstone is restricted and they are writing for the stone-cutter, although that may have been an influence, but from choice. Yet as it is my belief that we ought to familiarize ourselves with the idea of death (and indeed the War forced us overmuch to do so) you mustn't mind an epitaph or two now and then, particularly when they are beautiful. Or shall we get them all over at once—and illustrate my discovery too? The most famous of all, the epitaph on the Countess Dowager of Pembroke, every one knows:—

> Underneath this sable Hearse
> Lies the subject of all verse:
> Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother:
> Death, ere thou hast slain another
> Fair, and Learn'd, and Good as she,
> Time shall throw a dart at thee.

But I like hardly less the elegy on Elizabeth L. H. It is longer—longer indeed than the eight-line limit that we have set ourselves—but I have cut off the end, which is inferior:—

> Wouldst thou hear what Man can say
> In a little? Reader, stay.
> Underneath this stone doth lie
> As much Beauty as could die:

Which in life did harbour give
To more Virtue than doth live.
If at all she had a fault,
Leave it buried in this vault.

Then there is Herrick's "Upon a Child that Died" —another inspiration:—

Here she lies, a pretty bud,
Lately made of flesh and blood:
Who as soon fell fast asleep
As her little eyes did peep.
Give her strewings but not stir
The earth that lightly covers her.

With these, which are Tudor or early Stuart, I would associate the Scotch epitaph on Miss Lewars:—

Say, sages, what's the charm on earth
  Can turn Death's dart aside?
It is not purity and worth,
  Else Jessie had not died.

And Stevenson's best known poem is an epitaph too:—

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie:
Glad did I live and gladly die,
  And I laid me down with a will.
This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he long'd to be;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
  And the hunter home from the hill.

But enough of mortality! Let me tell you a little thing that happened yesterday. An Italian I used to know, a clerk, who has been in England for three or four years, came in to say goodbye. He is going home.

"You'll be glad to be seeing your wife again after all this long while," I said.

He pondered. "My wife, I don't know," he replied at last: "but my leetler boy, Oh, yais!" —Good night, my dear. R. H.

XXX

Septimus Tribe to Verena Raby

My Dear Sister,—I hasten to thank you for the timely case of champagne which you have sent for Letitia. It will, I am sure, revive her, even though the vintage is a little immature. I consider 1911 to be still too young, which reminds me that it is in the correction of errors such as this, trifling but easily evitable, that I could be of so much use to you on the kind of periodical supervising visit to your establishment (now necessarily neglected through your most regrettable accident) which I have before suggested, and

which, even at great personal inconvenience, I am still ready at any time to pay. At the present moment, however, it seems to me that a visit from Letitia would be even more desirable, for when one is sick and surrounded by comparative strangers, who should be a more welcome guest than a sister? And it is long since you two have met. Apart from the pleasure of reunion, the little change would do Letitia good. Save for myself, who am not, I am aware, too vivacious a companion, the poor dear sees almost no one. With a slightly augmented income she could take a place in society here far more appropriate to her birth; but when one has not the means to return hospitality one is a little sensitive about accepting it. Awaiting your reply, I am, your affectionate brother-in-law, SEPTIMUS TRIBE

XXXI

VERENA RABY TO RICHARD HAVEN

MY DEAR RICHARD,—This is my first letter in my own hand and it must be short. I am very grateful to you. Would not that be a nice

epitaph—"He never disappointed"? Well, it is true of you.

Your idea of the short poems is perfect and I have already learned some.

Nesta is excellent company, but I fear she is giving me more time than it is fair to take. Every now and then, when she is apparently looking at me, I can see that her glance is really fixed on her children, many miles off. The far-away nursery look.

It is *almost* worth being ill to discover how kind people can be. If it is true (and of course it is) that to give pleasure to others is the greatest happiness, then I can comfort myself, as I lie here apparently useless, that I have my uses after all, since I am the cause of that happiness in so many of my friends.—Yours, V.

XXXII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

Dearest Verena, your testimonial gave me extraordinary pleasure, and I wish it was true.

I don't say, in spite of your charming piece of altruistic reasoning, that you are lucky to be in

bed, but to have to remain in a remote rural spot while England is getting herself into order again is not a bad thing. For it is a slow and rather unlovely process. Just at the moment War seems, as one remembers it (and of course I speak only of England, not of the Front), a more desirable condition than Peace. There is no doubt that the country is a fit place for Profiteeroes to live in.

I felt sure that you knew Clifford's excellent nonsense for the young. As you don't know it, you shall; but not yet! A surprise is brewing.

With the steady assistance of my invaluable Miss Faith and her little Corona (which is not, alas! a cigar, but a typewriter) I have amassed already a collection of brief poems such as may gently occupy your thoughts in the wakeful sessions of the night. These I shall dole out to you, one by one, for you to take or leave as you feel "dispoged." I have not gone beyond my own shelves, but if ever I find myself with the run of somebody else's no doubt I shall find many more, probably equally good or even better. We might call it the *Tabloid Treasury* when it is ready?

Having sent you the other day all those elegiac efforts, I am now copying out three or four short

poems where the poets take stock and prepare to put up the shutters, and here again the quality is high. The most famous example is, of course, Landor's:

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

But Landor had a predecessor who said much the same in a homelier manner:—

My muse and I, ere youth and spirits fled,
Sat up together many a night, no doubt:
But now I've sent the poor old lass to bed,
Simply because my fire is going out.

Stevenson must have had Landor's lines in mind when he made this summary of his own career:—

I have trod the upward and the downward slope;
I have endured and done in days before;
I have longed for all, and bid farewell to hope;
And I have lived and loved, and closed the door.

A final example, from the French of the Abbé Regnier:—

Gaily I lived as ease and nature taught,
And spent my little life without a thought,
And am amazed that Death, that tyrant grim,
Should think of me, who never thought of him.

Don't be afraid; in future I shall send you only one poem at a time. R. H.

XXXIII

Horace Mun-Brown to Verena Raby

Dear Aunt,—If I have from time to time bothered you with my financial schemes I am very sorry. But I have an active brain, and too few briefs. Also I want to be in a sound financial position, and, under more favourable circumstances, most of my projects would, I am sure, succeed. But you are the only capitalist that I know, and just at the moment you are, I now realize, not in a position to take any deep interest in monetary ventures. I ought to have thought of this before, and I apologise.

I write to you to-day for a very different purpose and that is, to enlist not your bank balance but your sympathy and, I hope, active help. In a nutshell, I want to marry Hazel. I have laid my case before her more than once, but she refuses to take me seriously. I am aware that I am not so superficially gay and insouciant as the majority of the young men of to-day; I know only too well that I cannot jazz and that I prefer dances where an intervening atmospheric space divides the part-

ners. But, though I may be old-fashioned, surely I have compensating qualities of value in married life. What I feel is that if only Hazel could be persuaded that I am in deadly earnest, and that marriage is not one of—what she calls—my "wild-cat schemes," she would begin to look upon me with a new eye. I am very human *au fond*, dear Aunt, and, in my own way, I adore Hazel. Would you not try to persuade her to be more kind and understanding?—I am, your affectionate nephew, HORACE MUN-BROWN

P.S.—On reading this letter through, I find that I have made what looks rather like a pun—that passage about Hazel and a nutshell. I assure you, my dear Aunt, it was unintentional. I should never joke about love.

XXXIV

RICHARD HAVEN TO VERENA RABY

MY DEAR, I have found you a Reader, but I hate to part with her. It would not, however, do for anyone so young and comely to sit at the bedside of a hale man of my years, and so you

shall have her. But O her voice! Irish, and south-west Irish at that. In point of fact, Kerry, with hints of the Gulf Stream in it, all warm and caressing.

Miss Clemency Power—that is her pretty name—is not, I take it, in any kind of need, but she worked all through the War and wants to continue to be independent. And quite right too, say I. And Robbie Burns said it before me, in one of his English efforts:—

> the glorious privilege
> of being independent,

he called it.

Miss Power is going to you on Thursday on a month's probation, and she is my gift to you, remember: I have arranged it all. It is very Sultanic to be distributing young women like this, and you must be properly grateful. I was never Sultanic before.

Here's a nice thing my sister Violet's charwoman said yesterday. Violet seems to have been looking rather more wistful than usual, but for no particular reason. The charwoman, however, noticed it and commented upon it.

"You look very sad this morning," she said.

"But then," she added, "ladies generally do."

"Why is that?" Violet asked.

"They have such difficult lives," she said. "It's their husbands, I think."

"But you have a husband."

"Yes, but we don't notice our husbands as much as you do. They come in and they're cross and they swear, and we let them. We've got our work to get on with. But with ladies it's different; they take notice."

Your daily poem:—

> He who bends to himself a joy
> Does the winged life destroy;
> But he who kisses the joy as it flies
> Lives in eternity's sunrise.
>
> If you trap the moment before it's ripe
> The tears of repentance you'll certainly wipe;
> But if once you let the ripe moment go,
> You can never wipe off the tears of woe.

A lot of wisdom there, but for most of us, who are so far from being children, rather a counsel of perfection.—Good night. R. H.

P.S.—A travelling friend tells me that outside the gate of the Misericordia, in Osaka, Japan, is this notice, the meaning of which is clear after a

moment's examination: "The sisters of the Misericordia harbour every kind of disease and have no respect for religion."

XXXV

CLEMENCY POWER TO THE HON. MRS. POWER

DEAREST MOTHER,—I have got a job at last—the least like a War job that you could imagine. I have been engaged to read for an hour or so every day to a Miss Raby, a lady who owing to an accident has to lie still for months and months. After all my adventures in France this is a great change.

Miss Raby lives near Kington in Herefordshire, a long way from London and indeed a long way from anywhere, but it is fine country and there are splendid hills to walk on, Hargest Ridge in particular, where the air is the most bracing I ever knew, and you look over to the Welsh mountains. She has an old spacious house in its own grounds, but I am lodging with one of the villagers; which I greatly prefer. Miss Raby has a nurse, and one of her nieces, a Mrs.

Rossiter, who is charming, is with her. I am a sort of extra help and am gradually being allowed to do more and more and now have had the picking of the flowers entrusted to me.

Miss Raby herself is the sweetest creature, a kind of ideal aunt. She is somewhere in the forties, I suppose, and had a very full life, in a quiet way, before she was ill, and she is very brave in bearing her inactivity, which must be terribly irksome at times and especially in very fine weather. I am here nominally to read, but we talk most of the time, and she is never tired of hearing about the War and all my experiences. She knows the part of the garden that every flower comes from, and I think her greatest joy every day is her interview with the gardener.

One thing I have discovered is how very few books bear reading aloud. The authors don't think of that when they are writing and so the words are wrongly placed. Another thing is that books that are silly anyway are heaps sillier when read aloud.

I ought to say that although I am in Miss Raby's service (don't wince) she is not my employer—I was engaged by a Mr. Haven, her old-

est friend, who has presented me to her!—Your loving C.

XXXVI

Verena Raby to Richard Haven

Dearest Richard,—I like the woman thou gavest me very much and rejoice in her brogue, and I am very grateful to you, always. Tell me more about the state of things. I can bear it.—Yours, V.

XXXVII

Verena Raby to Hazel Barrance

Dearest Hazel,—I have had a rather pathetic letter from poor Horace, who, after long wooing you in vain, comes to me (I hope this isn't betraying his confidence: I don't think it is really) as a new legal Miles Standish. Young men at the Bar are not usually so ready to seek other mouthpieces, are they? Not those, at any rate, next to whom I used to sit at dinner parties in the days when I was well and now and then came to London.

Of course, my dear child, I am not going to interfere. To be quite candid, I don't want you to marry Horace. I think you would condemn yourself to a very stuffy kind of existence if you did, and I am against first-cousins marrying in any case. But his appeal gives me an opportunity of saying what I have more than once wished, and that is that you would revise your general attitude to marriage. Again and again in your letters to me I have detected a bitterness about it, the suggestion that because some couples have fallen out, all must sooner or later do so. This isn't true. But even if it were, it ought not to deter us, for all of us must live our own lives, and make our own experiments, and all of us ought to believe that we are the great splendid triumphant exceptions! It is that belief—I might almost call it religion—which I miss in you and which seems to be now so generally lacking. Put on low grounds it might be called the gambling spirit, but it is a form of gambling in which there is no harm, but rather virtue. I often wish that I had had more of it, but I was unfortunate in having my affections so enchained by one who too little knew his mind, nor sufficiently valued his cap-

tive, that I was never free to consider offers.

Marriage may always be a lottery and often turn out disastrously, and even more often be a dreary curtailment of two persons' liberty, but it is a natural proceeding and, unless one utterly denies any purpose in life, a necessary one; and I am all in favour of young people believing in it. I wish that you were braver and healthier about it, but I don't want you to become Mrs. Horace Mun-Brown, and I am telling him so.

This is the longest letter I have written since I took to my bed; indeed I believe it is the longest I ever wrote.—Your loving AUNT V.

XXXVIII

SEPTIMUS TRIBE TO VERENA RABY

MY DEAR SISTER,—I was grieved to learn from a third party that you are no better; indeed rather worse. Letitia and I were hoping that every day showed improvement. In the possibility that one deterrent cause may be too much thought, it has occurred to us that the presence in the house, to be called upon whenever needed, of a soothing voice, might be a great solace and

aid. Such a voice transmitting the words of the poets, the philosophers or even the romancers, could not but distract the mind of the listener from her own anxieties and gradually induce repose. Letitia, to whom I have been reading for some years, will tell you—with more propriety than I can—how melodious and sonorous an organ is mine. You have but to say the word and it is at your service.—I am, your affectionate brother-in-law, SEPTIMUS TRIBE

XXXIX

ANTOINETTE ROSSITER TO HER MOTHER

DEAREST MUMMY,—When you come home you will find another baby here, only it isn't a real baby, it's a puppy. A spaniel. Mr. Hawkes gave it to us and he says we are to own it together so that each of us has a bit. He says I am to have its stomach and mouth, which means I have got to feed it, and Cyril is to have its front legs and ears, and Lobbie its hind legs and tail, and its tongue is to belong to us all. I have told Cyril that you and Daddy ought to have an ear each but he won't give them up. The ears of a

spaniel are the nicest part, next to the lips. It is a girl and Mr. Hawkes says that this means that when it grows up it will be fondest of Cyril. We have named it Topsy because it is a girl and black. Do come home soon and see it.—Your everlastingly loving TONY.

x x x x x x
x x x x

XL

NESTA ROSSITER TO SEPTIMUS TRIBE

DEAR UNCLE SEPTIMUS,—Aunt Verena asks me to thank you for your kind offer, but to say that a trained reader has already been secured. With love to Aunt Letitia,—I am, yours sincerely, NESTA ROSSITER

XLI

HAZEL BARRANCE TO VERENA RABY

DEAR AUNT,—You were the kindest thing to write to me like that. Such a long letter too! I hope you weren't too tired after it. But, alas! the pity is it has not converted me. Marriage for

every one else if you like, but not for me. I have seen too much of it, nor do I seem to want any of the things it gives except escape from home. But it would be escaping only to another form of bondage. Every one is not made for domesticity and I am sure I am not. I hate everything to do with the preparation of meals. I even rather hate meals themselves and would much prefer to eat only when I felt hungry, a little at a time and fairly often and alone. The idea of munching for evermore punctually and periodically opposite the same man both repels and infuriates me. I wonder if you can understand this. The thought of Horace under these conditions is too revolting.

Since I wrote to you Horace has actually been to father, behind my back; but father is much too pleased with my likeness to himself to be unsporting, and Horace was sent away with the warning that he hadn't an earthly—but if he cared to persist he must come to me direct and to no one else. He would have gone to mother for a cert if she had not been so wholly occupied with the affairs of the next world.

Father was really funny about it. "What does Horace want to marry for, anyway?" he said:

"he knows how to speak French"—this referring to his old theory that what men most want in wives is a gift of tongues when travelling abroad.

But apart from not wanting to marry, marriage frightens me. It means losing the fine edge of courtesy and kindness and tenderness. I see so many married people—girls I knew when they were engaged—one or two to whom I was bridesmaid—and they are all so coarsened by it and take things so for granted. I don't think anything is sadder than the way in which little pretty indulged sillinesses when a girl is engaged, become detestable in her husband's eyes after they are married. Losing umbrellas, for example.

That's the end of my grumbling about marriage. This correspondence, as the editors say, must now cease, and henceforth I will write only when I have something cheerful and amusing to tell you. I have been selfishly using you far too long.—Your loving HAZEL

XLII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear, I am delighted to hear about my Irish girl. Some day I should like to be ill myself—nicely, languidly ill, without pain—just for the pleasure of having her read to me.

I hope you aren't letting the papers prey on your mind. Far better not read them, or, rather, not hear them read; but I expect that is to suggest too much. After a great war there must always be a period of ferment and unrest, and that is what we are undergoing now. I don't in the least despair of cosmos emerging, but nothing will ever be the same again and it will be a very expensive chaos for years to come.

What chiefly worries me is the impaired standard of efficiency, the scamping, the cheating and the general cynicism. I seem to discern a universal decrease of pride. The best, the genuine, has gone, and substitutes reign. Tradespeople no longer keep their word and are impenitent when taxed with it. A certain amount of dishonesty must, I suppose, be bred of a war. Officers, for

example, had to be fed and couldn't be expected to inquire too closely of their batmen where the chickens came from, and no doubt a good deal of this bivouacking morality persists. But I wish it hadn't affected life so generally. I rather fancy that what this old England of ours is most in need of is a gentleman at the helm. A nobleman would not be bad, but a gentleman would be better. No harm if he were rich and could win the Derby. But where to find him? He is a gift of the gods, to be proffered or withheld according to their whim or their interest in old England. If they are tired of us (as now and then one can almost fear), then we may never get him.—
Yours, R. H.

And here is to-day's poem, a very brief one but a very striking one too:—

Reason has moons, but moons not hers
Lie mirror'd on the sea,
Confounding her astronomers,
But, O! delighting me.

XLIII

Verena Raby to Hazel Barrance

My Dear Hazel,—My last letter too, on this subject, but you must answer it. There is much in yours with which I sympathize and I think I understand all of it. There is a vein of almost fierce fastidiousness in our family (your grandfather had too much of it) which is discernible in you, but I don't despair of seeing a deal of it broken down when you meet the right man. So much of what you say about things seems to me to be due to your manlessness. I don't believe that any wholly right view of life is possible to celibates or those who have never loved. They *must* see it piecemeal. I don't despair of you at all, but you must get out of the habit of expecting perfection. And where would the fun of marriage be if it was not partly warfare—give and take?—Your truly loving and solicitous

Aunt V.

P.S.—Don't stop writing about yourself if you have any prompting to. What is an old bedridden woman for but to try and help others?

XLIV

Patricia Power to Clemency Power

You Dear Lucky Clem,—I am so glad you are fixed up all comfy and I wish I could do the same, but Herself won't hear of it. She says that one mad daughter out in the world when there is no need for it is enough. I can't make her see that it isn't the money that matters, but the importance of doing something for the sake of one's own dignity. All the same, some one must of course stay with her. I'm sure that if I were to go, Adela wouldn't stick it another minute. But remember me if you ever hear of an opening or if this Mr. Haven of yours is proposing to distribute any more damsels among his friends.

Herself has been very fit lately and we've got two more Dexters—such pets. One is named Dilly and the other Dally, but that's not their nature. We liked the names for them, that's all. So far from being their nature, they give quarts of milk.

We went over to the Pattern at Kilmakilloge last week in the motor-boat, but Tim wouldn't let

us stay long because the boys were out with their shillelaghs and he was fearful of a fight. But it was great fun. Dr. O'Connor was there with his new wife, very massive and handsome, and he was so comically proud of her, and Mr. Sheehan was as mischievous as ever and even invited us to play lawn tennis at Derreen by moonlight. It would have been funny if we had and Lord Lansdowne had turned up. We walked round the lake once, with the cripples, and gave shillings to I don't know how many beggars, and then Tim forced us away. Every one was jigging then, except those who were singing in the inn. Good night, lucky one.—Your only PAT.

P.S.—This did not get off last night and now I reopen it to say that I am enclosing a letter which arrived this morning and has all the appearance of being the handiwork of a beau. I like the writing, so decisive and distinct. P.

[*Enclosure*]

XLV

Bryan Field to Clemency Power

Dear Miss Power,—I promised I would let you know when I was returning to England. Well, I am due next week, for the hospital is closing. I suppose you don't know of a nice snug little practice in a good sporting neighbourhood with several wealthy *malades imaginaires* of both sexes dotted conveniently about? That's what I want, a kind of sinecure. Forgive the low ambition. Indeed I am punished already for indulging it, for see how double-edged the word "sinecure" is, and what a sarcasm on my profession!

Having had one or two letters to you returned as "gone away" I have sent this to your home address to be forwarded. I hope you did not think that I should let you go, having once found you! The skies are not so lavish with their blessings as that! No, begob! I shall be very unhappy until an answer comes to this.—Yours sincerely,

Bryan Field

XLVI

Hazel Barrance to Verena Raby

My Dear Aunt,—Just one more word, then! —but only to say it's no good, I can't agree with you. The idea of marriage being necessarily warfare is utterly repugnant to me, and unless a miracle happens I shall continue to go on doing my best to be happy though single. I see no reason whatever for people to scrap, and those who like it always fill me with a kind of disgust. Married life should be all friendliness and niceness. I feel so strongly about married happiness that I believe if I were asked to name my favorite poem in all poetry I should give the old epitaph on the husband who so quickly followed his wife to the grave:

> She first deceased; he for a little tried
> To live without her, liked it not, and died.

No news of Horace for quite a long time. I suspect him of searching London for an apothecary of the Romeo and Juliet type who can provide love-philtres and I shall look at my drink very narrowly the next time he dines here or I

meet him out. It would be like him to put a love-philtre on the market.—Your loving H.

XLVII

Clemency Power to Bryan Field

Dear Doctor,—It was very nice of you to write and I am sorry that I missed those other letters. If you kept them, please send them on. I am now in a very different employment from that which I had when we used to meet. I am reader to an invalid lady—not, I hope, a permanent invalid, and most emphatically not one of your desired *malades imaginaires*—who lives in a beautiful house in Herefordshire. My duties are not confined to reading aloud but comprise a hundred other things and I am very happy. I don't say that I don't often regret those rough jolly boys, but one could not wish the War to last longer just for one's own entertainment. I wonder how some of our old friends are—that poor Madame La Touche, does she still carry round the bill of damage done and horses taken which the Germans some day are to pay? And old Gaston, are his repentances and good resolutions

any more binding? How long ago it all seems, and, though so real, how like a dream! I hope you will find a practice to your mind, but I am sure you don't really want an idle one. I know too much about your zealous way with sick and wounded men ever to believe that.—I am, yours sincerely, CLEMENCY POWER

P.S.—What does "begob" mean? I don't understand foreign languages.

XLVIII

LOUISA PARRISH TO VERENA RABY

MY DEAR VERENA,—I was glad to have your niece's letter saying that you are progressing nicely. I am so afraid of those falls, and you never know even when you feel well again whether there may not be some underlying trouble to break out again at any moment. We shall all pray that nothing of the kind will happen to you. I can't help wishing that you had the advantage of being attended by our dear Dr. Courage. He is so clever and kind and thoughtful.

My rheumatism has been troubling me again

lately and nothing seems to do it any good. I deny myself sugar and potatoes and everything that is said to foster it, but to no purpose. I fear it is so deep-seated that I shall be a martyr to it all my life, but there is this consolation that they say that people who have rheumatism seldom have anything else. In this world we can't expect to be too happy.

We have been in great trouble lately through want of maids. I don't know what has come over the servant class, but they don't seem to value a good place at all any more. Maid after maid has been here and has left. Whether it is that we haven't a cinema near, or what, I don't know, but they won't stay. And the wages they ask are terrible. It seems to me that the world has gone mad. The wonderful thing is that they can always find some one to carry their boxes, and they get away so quickly. Not that we have ever missed anything, but they seem to decide to go all of a sudden, and no kind of consideration for us, and me with my rheumatism, ever stops them. How different from my young days when old Martha our cook went on for ever at I am sure not more than twenty pounds a year, and Arthur

the butler never dreamed of leaving or asking for a rise. But since the War everybody is wild for excitement and change. I must stop now as the Doctor is waiting downstairs.—Your sincerely loving friend, LOUISA

P.S.—I reopen this, later, to say that I have just heard that my poor cousin Lady Smythe is to undergo an operation.

XLIX

RICHARD HAVEN TO VERENA RABY

VERENA, my dear, *apropos* of the newspapers and your dread of all their alarms and excursions, don't believe everything you read. Fleet Street has to live, and it can do so only by selling its papers, which have first to be filled. Take, as an example of exaggeration, the outcry against Departmental inefficiency as if it were a new thing. It has always been the same, only the scale was larger during the War and after it. There have always been round pegs in square holes, and disregard of public money, and, as I happen to know, improper destruction of documents.

You say you want a story now and then. Well, here is one from my own experience, gathered as it happens in the very country the violation of which brought us into the struggle, and bearing upon official cynicism too.

Some years ago, I was travelling by a small cross-country railway in Belgium. It was a bad train at all times, but on this occasion it behaved with alarming eccentricity: at one time tearing along by leaps and bounds, and then becoming snailier than the snailiest, until at last, just outside a station, it stopped altogether. We waited and waited; nothing happened; and so first one passenger and then another alighted to see what was the matter, until gradually every one of us was on the line. Why the train did not immediately rush on and leave us all behind I cannot say; but, as you will agree, it might easily have done so, for when we reached the engine it was discovered that both the driver and stoker were gloriously and wildly drunk.

There are never lacking leaders on such occacions as these—and we quickly had several, equally noisy; but by degrees some kind of policy was agreed upon, and we all marched in a foolish

procession to the station behind the group of three gentlemen who led us, and who walked (and stumbled over the sleepers) abreast, either sideways or backwards as they thought of new words and new gestures to apply to the outrage. At the station we were met by the station-master, and a battle of explanations and protests and repetitions set in and was waged terrifically, the issue of which was the production of a large sheet of paper on which we all, one by one, signed our names beneath a record of the offence, with the date and place carefully noted. By the time this was done the station-master had managed to find a new and sober driver and stoker, and the train could resume its journey.

I—perhaps because I was English, and there was nothing to gain—happened to be the last to sign, and therefore the last to rejoin the train. As I was getting into it I found that I had left my pipe in the office, and I hurried back to recapture it. I was just in time to see the station-master placing the last of the pieces of the torn-up manifesto on the fire.

After that I feel that you must have something

more than usually beautiful in the way of a short poem. Try this:—

Here lies a most beautiful lady,
  Light of step and heart was she;
I think she was the most beautiful lady
  That ever was in West Country.
But beauty vanishes; beauty passes;
  However rare—rare it be;
And when I crumble, who will remember
  This lady of the West Country?

Having copied that out it occurs to me that it is almost too personal and memento-mori-ish. Let me hasten to say that the part of the West Country indicated is not Herefordshire but, let us say, Gloucestershire. How careful one always has to be—and isn't! R. H.

L

Horace Mun-Brown to Verena Raby

My Dear Aunt,—I had anticipated your objection to the marriage of first-cousins, which is one of your arguments against my courtship of Hazel. An acquaintance of mine who is connected with a statistical laboratory has long been making enquiries into the whole matter of con-

sanguinity, and the results are surprising. The children of first-cousins are by no means doomed to imbecility or decadence. But even if they were that should not necessarily deter me, for the union of Hazel and myself might prove to be childless, although none the less happy for that, and it would be grievous and tragic to permit a superstition to keep us sundered.

But I am letting the whole matter rest for a while and endeavouring to soothe my fever by concentrating once again on financial schemes. For without money I have no home to offer any wife. You will remember my project, in which I still believe implicitly, for establishing a Cinema in the City? Well, it has fallen through. The reply from the only churchwarden who has been polite enough to answer my very courteous letter is unsatisfactory. He displays an antiquated reluctance to come into line with the march of progress. And as the price of ordinary building land in the neighbourhood of Cheapside is prohibitive I must reluctantly abandon the notion either as unripe or as unsuited to my hands. But I am sure I was on the right track.

I now have a new and more practical scheme

to unfold. While walking down the Strand yesterday I made a curious discovery in which I am sure you will be interested. I noticed that in the whole street there is no shop devoted to woman's dress—not even a milliner's. Considering that the Strand is always too full of people of both sexes and that it is largely a pleasure street —I mean that the people have time to look about and money to spend—this is a very strange thing and I am sure there would be big profits in remedying it. My idea is to find the capital for an emporium to be established somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Beaver Hut, where men and women are passing the whole time; visitors to London- staying at the Savoy and other great hotels—many of them very wealthy Americans; —people arriving at Charing Cross from Kent (one of the richest counties); and so on. How natural for the men to wish to give the women something pretty to wear!—to say nothing of the women's own constant desire for new clothes and hats.

All that is needed is a certain amount of capital to build and stock with, and the services of a first-class man from one of the big Oxford Street

places to act as manager. If you are sufficiently interested in the scheme to invest in it, please let me know the amount.

I hope you are better. I have one of my bad attacks of nasal catarrh.—Yours sincerely,

HORACE MUN-BROWN

LI

ROY BARRANCE TO VERENA RABY

DEAR AUNT VERENA,—I am broken-hearted and turn first to you for sympathy as you are always so kind and all my pals are out of town. The fact is, Trixie and I have parted for ever. I can't explain how it happened, because my brain is all in a whirl about it, and really I don't know, but somehow I offended her and it is all off. My life is a blank and all the plans I had made are mockeries. I had even begun to look in furniture-shop windows. And then it all went wrong, and when I got to the Jazzle Ball a little bit late, which I couldn't help, I found that she had given every dance away to other men, one of whom is an officer bounder whom I had most carefully

warned her against: a regular T.G. (Temporary Gentleman) of the worst type.

I wish you were better so that I might come and talk to you about it all. I could tell you in words so much more than I can write, especially with the mouldy pens at this Club. The only satisfactory part is that I had not bought the engagement ring, not having enough money for it. I don't mean that I should regret the money but that I should hate to receive the blighted thing back. As it is I had not given her anything but chocolates, and of course we exchanged cigarette cases: but I don't intend to use hers any more. I could not enjoy a cigarette from a case so fraught with memories.

If I were a little more independent I should try to forget my sorrows in travel, but I can't. And dancing has ceased to interest me. In fact, I believe it is this dancing that is very largely the matter with England. If we danced less and worked more I am sure we should be "winning the Peace" more thoroughly. If you have any ideas for me of a strenuous kind I should like to hear of them, for I am all for toil now. I have

frittered my time away too long.—Your affectionate nephew, ROY

P.S.—If you are writing to Hazel or any one at home please don't mention my tragedy as they did not know I was engaged.

LII

BRYAN FIELD TO SIR SMITHFIELD MARK

DEAR SIR SMITHFIELD,—You have always been so kind in giving me advice, and now and then a hand, that I am following the natural course of gratitude and coming to trouble you again.

The hospital in France is just closing and I shall be on the loose. I shall look out for a practice, but, meanwhile, I wondered if any rural friend of your own might be in need of a locum: I say rural because the desire to be in old England again is very strong, after so many months of this foreign land, which, however beautiful in effects of light and space, never quite catches the right country feeling. I wonder if you know any one

in, say, Herefordshire, who wants a change? Of course a Bart's man.—I am, yours sincerely,

BRYAN FIELD

LIII

JOSEY RABY TO VINCENT FRANK

DARLING VIN,—It is dreadful, but father won't hear of an engagement. He is so absurdly old-fashioned and does not realize that everything has changed. No doubt when he was your age, long ago in the eighteen-nineties, people could wait for each other; but why should we? I don't suppose that then they even knew how to kiss. He says the most ridiculous things. He says that a girl ought to know a man at least for a year and that twenty-one is the earliest age at which she should marry. Why, Juliet was only about fourteen when she was betrothed to Romeo, and lots of Indian girls are widows before our hair is up. And what is the sense of love at first sight if you have to wait? Father also says that aviation is not a desirable profession for a son-in-law, entirely forgetting that half the fun of our marriage will be the flying honeymoon.

I think you had better call on father boldly and have it out with him.—Your own J.

LIV

THEODORE RABY TO VERENA RABY

DEAR OLD V.,—If Josey writes to you for sympathy in her struggle with a stern and heartless parent, please oblige me and help the little idiot (bless her, all the same!) by supporting me.

These are the cold facts. She is eighteen and has been frivolling far too much, largely because she has no mother and I have been too much occupied to attend to her properly. Also because the War made frivolling too easy by fledging so many infants at lightning speed. Among the acquaintances that she has picked up at this and that *thé dansant* is a flying boy, and, just because other boys and girls have married in haste, she must needs insist on marrying in haste too. No doubt she thinks herself in love and no doubt also he does, although I shouldn't be surprised to find that he is more pursued than pursuing, as is so often the case now; but the whole thing is derivative really, and I can't have my one little Precious

thrown away on an experiment in imitation.

The bore is that—to such a pass has the world come!—she might at any moment perform the Gretna Green act. Self-restraint, you see, is a little out of fashion up here: we all live for ourselves now, to the great detriment of the Human Family which peace was to consolidate. To forbid her to see the boy seems to me a mistake. If you were well I should ask you to invite her to the country, but you are not well, my poor dear, and she wouldn't go even if you were—not so long as her warrior is accessible. And he seems to be always in town, the exceptional perils of the air being, it appears, compensated for by exceptional opportunities of leave.

So far as I can gather he is a decent young fellow and he may be on my side—but he doesn't come and see me and it seems rather absurd to go to see him. The new soldier, and especially when he flies, is not to be found at home too easily! This one seems to be the usual enfranchised public-school boy—to whom the wonders and mysteries of life are either top-hole or incomprehensible, or both, and an eclipse of the sun would be merely a "solar stunt."

Even if Josey had her foolish way I don't suppose that the end of the world would arrive, but it would be sad and disappointing and I am certain that she would very quickly regret her impetuosity.—Yours as ever, THEO.

P.S.—All this about me and mine and nothing of your trouble. Dear old V. I do so hope that you are mending. I must come and see you and the old home soon. It will be a dreadful thought some day—how one postpones these necessary acts!

LV

NESTA ROSSITER TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR "UNCLE" RICHARD,—I wonder if you could possibly come down, if only for a night, to see Aunt Verena. She really needs a good talk with some one sensible and frank. We all do our best but we are not sufficient. It is very bad, I am sure, for a naturally active woman such as she is to be forced to lie still in this way. She has even begun to talk about the extent to which complete invalidism should be endured, how fair

it is to the community to be a deadweight, and so on. So if you could manage even a flying visit it would be a great relief to us all and a great comfort to her.—I am, yours sincerely,

NESTA

LVI

RICHARD HAVEN TO NESTA ROSSITER

DEAR NESTA, it is impossible, I fear, for a week or so. But I will come then, although only for a night.—Yours, R. H.

LVII

VERENA RABY TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR RICHARD,—I am very unhappy. I do not get any better and I am a deadweight. I want to arrange my affairs and I have no adviser but you. I cannot bear to be an imposition on others, even when they assume the burden so smilingly. The kindness of people to people is far more extraordinary than their unkindness, I think. If I were to take an overdose, should I also be "of unsound mind?"—Your very dependent and despondent V.

LVIII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

[*Telegram*]

Coming by 2.35 for night. R. H.

LIX

Verena Raby to Richard Haven

[*By hand*]

Dearest Richard—Just a line to say good-bye and to thank you for coming down. It is monstrous to ask you to come so far for such a short time. I feel much more serene and shall now be brave again. I hope you will have an easy journey.

I have been wondering most of the night if it was not very unfair to force so much thinking upon you, when you are, I am sure, busy enough. And I don't want to be unfair. If I did, I should just leave all my money to you, with an intimation that you were my Grand Almoner, and die

in peace. But I can't do that, partly because you might die too and there is no one in the world but you who is really to be trusted. Do believe I am truly grateful for your daily letters and your persistence in what must often be an irksome task.—Yours always, V.

LX

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Poor Dear, "irksome" be d—d! There is nothing irksome in talking to you on paper for a little while every day. Indeed, a lot of it is pure luxurious pleasure, because I can indulge in the rapture of (so to speak) hearing my own platitudinous cocksure voice.

It was a long journey, but I am safely back. It was splendid to find you looking so little pulled down and to see all those nice faces round you. I pride myself on being able to pick a Reader against any man!

While the train was stopping—much too long—just outside some country station, I watched three farm-labourers hoeing, and all three were smoking cigarettes. Now, before the War you

never saw a farm-labourer with a cigarette and you rarely saw him smoking during work. I am quite certain also that you can't smoke a cigarette and hoe without doing injustice either to the tobacco or to the crop. No farmer to-day would, however, I am sure, have the courage to protest.

"But," I said to a man the other week when he was blaming one of his messengers for an unpardonable delay, "if he behaves like that, it is your business as an employer to sack him."

"Sack him!" he replied blankly. "Employers don't give the sack any more; they get it."

And this is true.

But a change must come, and the interesting thing to see will be how complete that change is. One thing is certain, and that is that Capital and Labour will never resume their old relations; Labour has tasted too much blood. And you can't put servants into khaki and tell them they are our saviours and then expect them to return to the status of servitude—at any rate not the same ones. The process of grinding the working classes back to their old position of subjection is going to be impossible; and the statesmen will find that reconstruction must be based on founda-

tions which are set on a higher level than the old.

A man in the train gave me a new definition of the extreme of meanness: Saving a rose from Queen Alexandra's Day for use again next year.

Here is the poem:—

> Since all that I can ever do for thee
> Is to do nothing, this my prayer must be:
> That thou may'st never guess nor ever see
> The all-endured this nothing-done costs me.

Good night. R. H.

LXI

Verena Raby to Her Brother Walter in Texas

My Dear Walter,—It is far too long since I wrote to you, but now I have only too much time for letters, as an accident hurt my back and I have to lie up with too little to do.

I wonder so often how you are, and you never send a line, nor does Sally. You are the only one of our family of whom no one ever hears. Do make a great effort and answer this and tell me all about yourself and your life on the ranch. It must be so very different from ours. If you have

a camera, couldn't you send some photographs? Remember I have never seen Sally. I don't even know if there are any children.

The garden to-day looks lovely from my window. The old place has not changed much since our childish days, but the trees are higher. I have done very little to it beyond keeping it in repair and installing electric light, which is made by an oil engine, and a few modern things like that. There are more bath-rooms, for instance. One of them has been made out of that funny little bedroom where the rat came down the chimney and you brought up one of your young terriers to kill it and the dog was afraid and it nearly broke your heart. You haven't forgotten that?

The big playroom at the top I have not touched. It has the same wall-paper. Whenever any of the others—I mean the girls—come to see me and we go up there we always have a good cry. The screen with the *Punch* drawings, the big doll's house, the rocking horse: they are still there. Little Lobbie, Nesta's second child (Nesta is Lucilla's daughter, who married an artist), plays there now. Nesta is staying here to keep me company while I am ill. I don't have any pain; I

merely have to lie still and give the spine a chance.

Kington has grown very little. There are new houses near the station and we have a municipal park! That is about all. But it isn't what it was—probably no English town is since the motor car came into being. Some may be better, but I think that Kington has deteriorated and very few of our friends remain. Mr. and Mrs. Grace are still living at the Tower, but alone and very old; all the family has dispersed. One thing that has not changed is the temperature of the church; which is still cold. But there is a long—too long —Roll of Honour in the porch. How you must have regretted that lameness of yours when the War broke out!

I manage to keep in touch with most of us, chiefly through their children. Letitia I never see. I should like to, but she is not strong, and Tunbridge Wells is a long way off, and it is impossible to detach her from her husband, whom we rather avoid. I am afraid she is not happy, but I can do very little to help. Clara's son and daughter—Roy and Hazel—are very lively correspondents, and Evangeline, their youngest, seems a thoughtful child; but I fear that Hector Bar-

rance can be rather difficult at times. Theodore's only girl is just eighteen. Anna's boy Horace is a rather serious young man at the Bar. Lionel is still unmarried; he was made a C.B.E. in the War. Ronald is also unmarried and I hear from him now and then, but his duties keep him very close in Edinburgh. Every one is very kind to me in my illness, Richard Haven—you remember him? —writing every day. He is fixed in London. Nellie Sandley, whom you were so sweet upon that summer at Lyme Regis, died last week, poor girl, of pneumonia.

I wonder if all this interests you in the least, or if your new life in your new country is all-absorbing. It would be delightful to see you again. But at any rate do write and send some photographs if you can. Write directly you get this and then a longer letter later.—Your loving sister, VERENA

P.S.—I often wonder if you would not like the series of hunting scenes by Alken that used to be in the dining-room. Let me know and I will send them.

LXII

Verena Raby to Theodore Raby

My Dear Theo,—How very delightful to hear from you—even though it is such a tale of woe. I don't want you to have more of such perplexities, but I do want to have another letter. It was odd too because I was just beginning a long one to Walter asking for his news and telling him mine.

If Josey writes to me, you may be sure I will be on your side—but can't you get her something to do? It is idleness and enough money to buy new frocks that lead to these problems. I should like her to come here, but, as you say, she wouldn't accept just now.—Your very loving V.

LXIII

Evangeline Barrance to Verena Raby

Dear Aunt Verena,—I hope you are better. I told you some time ago that we were preparing a great surprise for you to cheer you up on your bed of sickness and pain. Well, it is now ready

and I send the first number. If you get well quickly there will never be another. It is called *The Beguiler* and has been written for you chiefly by the girls here. I am the editor. My great friend Mabel Beresford copied it all out. Doesn't she write beautifully? I hope you will like it. Roy has read it and he says it ought to deliver the goods.—Your loving EVANGELINE

No. 1. May, 1919

THE BEGUILER

OR

THE INVALID'S FRIEND

A Miscellany

COMPILED BY

EVANGELINE BARRANCE

ASSISTED BY A BUNCH OF FLOWERS

PEOPLE WHO REALLY DESERVE THE O.B.E.

I. COOK

If ever there was a heroine in real life it is Cook. She has to be all the time in the kitchen even when the sun shines and the birds are singing. The kitchen must be hot or the things wouldn't be properly done for dinner.

She is always cooking things for other people and she doesn't get anything to eat till they have finished, although of course she can taste as she goes along. This is a delicious thing to do, and when she is in a good humour she lets us dip our fingers in, but usually she says "Don't stop here hindering me."

She never goes out except to see if there is another egg or to pick mint or parsley or to talk to the butcher's boy, who is terrified of her. Sometimes she has to catch a chicken and kill it and afterwards she has to pluck it.

Our cook is very fat and when she goes upstairs she holds her side and pants. On Sundays she doesn't go to Church but to Chapel and she wears very bright colours. She had a lover once but he died. His portrait is in her bedroom with his funeral card under it. She says that her troth is in the tomb with him and never can she marry another. She also says that the talk about cooks and policemen having a natural attraction for each other is nonsense.

Her masterpieces are apple charlotte, bread-and-butter pudding, and Lancashire hot pot. She also makes delicious stews, which are better than other cooks', mother says, because she fries the vegetables first.

Her name is Gladys Mary but we call her Cook. She says that after a certain age, cooks have the right to be

called Mrs., but that she is a very long way from that age herself.

We are all horribly afraid that she will give notice, because a new one would be so hard to get. There is nothing we wouldn't do for her. She could cook as badly as she liked and no one would dare to say anything. But she cooks beautifully.

She truly deserves the O.B.E. "Rose"

HISTORICAL RHYMES

I. QUEEN ELIZABETH AND SIR WALTER RALEIGH

It was a wet and windy day
The ground was damp and dirty
But yet the Queen she would not stay.
They pressed her, she grew shirty.

"A murrain on you," she replied
"*I* care not for the weather."
And she went forth in all her pride
In silk and ruff and feather.

Beside her walked her courtiers gay
Although with cold they shivered;
How cold they were they dared not say
Lest with a glance be withered.

Look! in the middle of the road
A puddle wide and frightening.
"Wait, Madam!"—forward Raleigh strode
His satin cloak untightening.

Down in the wet he flung his cloak,
She stepped across quite dryly,
Then with her sweetest smile she spoke,
Commending him most highly.

"Pansy"

RULES AS TO BIRTHDAYS

FOR THE BENEFIT OF PARENTS

The person whose birthday it happens to be should be allowed to get up when they choose. There should be sausages for breakfast.

It seems hardly necessary to point out that there should be no lessons, and no walk.

Lunch should be chosen by the birthday person.

Sample Menu for a Birthday Lunch:—

Roast Chicken.
Bread Sauce.
Green Peas.
Squiggly Potatoes.
Trifle, with chocolate éclairs as an alternative.

In choosing birthday presents people should remember that the whole point of a present is that it is an extra. Clothes should never be given for birthday presents, because one *has* to have clothes and it is not at all exciting to be given a pair of stockings. Handkerchiefs do not count as clothes because they are pretty.

Some really good entertainment should be arranged for the afternoon. If in London a matinée is suggested, followed by tea at Rumpelmayer's. Bedtime should come at least two hours later than usual. If only these few simple rules could be committed to memory by those in authority what completely satisfactory occasions birthdays would be.

"Chrysanthemum"

BADLY-HEARD SAYINGS: 1. "HITCH YOUR WAGON TO A TAR."

A FABLE

THERE was once a pine wood on the slope of a hill, and in the middle of the wood was a lovely silver birch which could not grow as it should because the pine trees were so closely packed about it.

Instead of being sorry for it, the pine trees were insulting.

"What are you doing here anyway?" they said. "You weren't invited. This is a pine wood. Why aren't you out there on the common, among the brake fern, with all the others of your finicking useless tribe? Who wants silver birches? They do no good in the world." And so on.

The silver birch, who was a perfect lady, made no reply.

And then a war came and it was necessary to get timber for all kinds of purposes, and all over the country the woods were cut down, among them this pine wood, for pine is very useful for planks for building huts.

The men came with their axes and felled tree after tree, but when they reached the silver birch they said, "We'll leave this—it's no good for timber, and when all these others are gone it will have a chance."

And so it was left, and soon it stood all alone and very beautiful, surrounded by the dead bodies of the unkind pine trees, absolute queen of the hill.

Being a perfect lady it still said nothing to them, nor had it even smiled as they tottered and fell.

The moral is that every one's good time *may* come.

"CARNATION"

STRAY THOUGHTS ON PARENTS

Parents are always saying that they once were children too, but they give no signs of it.

It is a peculiarity of parents that they always want you to change your boots.

Parents have several set forms of speech, of which "You seem to think I'm made of money" is one, and "I never did that when I was your age" is another. They also wonder "What the world is coming to."

Parents live in houses, usually in the best rooms. They can't bear doors either to be left open or shut with a bang.

A funny thing about parents is that they can find interesting reading in newspapers.

"TULIPE NOIRE"

CORRESPONDENCE

DEAR EDITOR,—You did me the honour to ask me to contribute to your magazine, but as I am no writer I can send you nothing of my own. But I have arranged for a very nice piece of nonsense to be copied out for you. It was written by a mathematician and philosopher named W. K. Clifford and was published years ago but seems now to be forgotten. It was Mrs. W. K. Clifford who wrote a delightful book for children called *The Getting-well of Dorothy* and a delightful book for grown-ups called *Aunt Anne.* Wishing every success for *The Beguiler* in its most admirable campaign,—I am, yours faithfully,

RICHARD HAVEN
His mark X

THE GIANT'S SHOES

BY W. K. CLIFFORD

ONCE upon a time there was a large giant who lived in a small castle: at least, he didn't all of him live there, but he managed things in this wise. From his earliest youth up his legs had been of a surreptitiously small size, unsuited to the rest of his body: so he sat upon the south-west wall of the castle with his legs inside, and his right foot came out of the east gate, and his left foot out of the north gate, while his gloomy but spacious coat-tails covered up the south and west gates; and in this way the castle was defended against all comers, and was deemed impregnable by the military authorities. This, however, as we shall soon see, was not the case, for the giant's boots were inside as well as his legs: but as he had neglected to put them on in the giddy days of his youth, he was never afterwards able to do so, because there was not enough room. And in this bootless but compact manner he passed his time.

The giant slept for three weeks at a time and two days after he woke his breakfast was brought to him, consisting of bright brown horses sprinkled on his bread and butter. Besides his boots the giant had a pair of shoes, and in one of them his wife lived when she was at home: on other occasions she lived in the other shoe. She was a sensible practical kind of woman, with two wooden legs and a clothes-horse, but in other respects not rich. The wooden legs were kept pointed at the ends, in order that if the giant were dissatisfied with his breakfast he might pick up any stray people that were within reach, using his wife as a fork. This annoyed the inhabitants of the district, so they built their church in a south-westerly direction from the castle, behind the giant's back, that he might not be able to pick them up as they went in. But those who stayed outside to

play pitch-and-toss were exposed to great danger and sufferings.

Now, in the village there were two brothers of altogether different tastes and dispositions, and talents and peculiarities and accomplishments, and in this way they were discovered not to be the same person. The elder of them was most marvellously good at singing and could sing the Old Hundredth an old hundred times without stopping. Whenever he did this he stood on one leg and tied the other round his neck to avoid catching cold and spoiling his voice; but the neighbours fled. And he was also a rare hand at making guava dumplings out of three cats and a shoehorn, which is an accomplishment seldom met with. But his brother was a more meagre magnanimous person, and his chief accomplishment was to eat a wagon-load of hay overnight, and wake up thatched in the morning.

The whole interest of this story depends upon the fact that the giant's wife's clothes-horse broke in consequence of a sudden thaw, being made of organ pipes. So she took off her wooden legs and stuck them in the ground, tying a string from the top of one to the top of the other, and hung out her clothes to dry on that. Now this was astutely remarked by the two brothers, who therefore went up in front of the giant after he had his breakfast. The giant called out "Fork! fork!" but his wife, trembling, hid herself in the more recondite toe of the second shoe. Then the singing brother began to sing: but he had not taken into account the pious disposition of the giant, who instantly joined in the psalm, and this caused the singing brother to burst his head off, but, as it was tied by the leg, he did not lose it altogether.

But the other brother, being well thatched on account of the quantity of hay he had eaten overnight, lay down between the great toe of the giant, and the next, and wriggled. So the giant, being unable to bear tickling

in the feet, kicked out in an orthopodal manner: whereupon the castle broke and he fell backwards, and was impaled upon the sharp steeple of the church. So they put a label on him on which was written "Nupides Giganteus."

That's all.

End of Number 1 *of*
THE BEGUILER; *or* THE INVALID'S FRIEND.

LXIV

Verena Raby to Evangeline Barrance

My Dear Evangeline,—*The Beguiler* is by far the best magazine I ever read. I prefer it to all others, and if I were allowed to get up I should try it in my bath; but I can't yet and therefore have to be washed by a nurse. I never knew before that flowers wielded such graceful pens and the next time I go into the garden—which I hope will be this year—I shall walk up and down the borders with a new respect for them.

The Invalid's Friend has served its purpose wonderfully. I have read it three times with delight. It has made all its rivals on my table here look very foolish—the *Nineteenth Century* is conscious, beside it, of being too wordy, and *Blackwood's* of being without method, and the *Cornhill* of coming out too often, with a vulgar frequency, and the *Strand* of being too serious.

I am very proud of having a niece who is also such an editor. The only reason in the world why I don't want to get well instantly is because

I want to read the next number.—Your affectionate and grateful aunt. VERENA, B.I.
(*Beguiled Invalid*)

LXV

JOSEY RABY TO VERENA RABY

DEAREST OF AUNTS,—Now you are up to writing letters, I do wish you would send a line to father to try and make him more reasonable. He actually takes up the line that no girl should marry under the age of twenty-one and then not before she has known the man for a year. Just think of being so out-of-date as that! And he is so sensible in almost every other way, except about ices.

There are some men of course who need time for knowing, but Vincent is not one of them. I feel that I have known him all my life, although it is really only two months, but then he is so simple and open. If he weren't, he wouldn't call me his Sphinx, would he? For there is nothing mysterious about me really.

Don't you think that our first duty is to ourselves and that the fulfilment of ourselves is sa-

cred? I do, and I can fulfil myself only by marrying Vincent. Do, do help me!—Your loving J.

LXVI

Verena Raby to Josey Raby

My Dear Josey,—I am sorry for all your perplexities; but I can't offer any help. Your father probably knows best, but even if he doesn't, he must be considered too, because he is your father and you are a child. Besides, I find myself agreeing with what he says. Since you have asked my advice you must listen to it, and my advice is to obey your father and tell Vincent that you intend to do so. Your father has been very understanding. He has not forbidden you to see Vincent at all, as many fathers would have done; he has merely said that there are certain rules between you and him which must be respected. I think he is right, for two reasons. One because it is his house and he must be the head of it, and the other because you would be losing such a lot of your young life if you had your way and married now. Girls should be engaged; women mar-

ried. To leave school and come into a world such as yours and then miss all the fun of it between your age and twenty-one, is to be very foolish. It is throwing away a very delightful freedom.

Another thing—don't you owe anything to your father? You say that our first duty is to ourselves. I am not sure that we can always separate ourselves. Very often, and usually while we are living under other people's roofs and taking other people's money, we are not ourselves but a blending of ourselves and themselves. Aren't you and your father a little bit mixed up like that? Isn't he entitled a little longer to the company of the daughter he is so fond of? Think about it from his point of view.—Your loving

AUNT V.

LXVII

VINCENT FRANK TO JOSEY RABY

JOSEY PET,—My own sphinxling, I adore having your letters, but don't you think it might be best to put all three or four each day into one envelope and post them. With special messengers so constantly coming, the fellows here get to sus-

pect things and are so poisonously funny about it. There is no chaff I wouldn't stand so long as you loved me, but now and then too much chipping gets on one's nerves, darling. I shall be at the Pic. on Saturday at 7.5 and have taken our usual table.—Yours ever, VIN ORDINAIRE

LXVIII

SIR SMITHFIELD MARK TO BRYAN FIELD

MY DEAR FIELD,—By a most extraordinary chance, I do know of a man in the country—and the desired country at that—Herefordshire, in fact. He is a Bart's contemporary and a very old friend, and he not only needs a holiday but is going to take one with me. Everything is arranged. I have secured him by holding you out as the best possible substitute. I am grateful to you for writing to me, for it is too long since we went away together and too long since I threw a fly in Sutherland, where we are going.

Communicate with him direct: Sinclair Ferguson, Kington, Herefordshire.—I am, yours sincerely, SMITHFIELD MARK

LXIX

Horace Mun-Brown to Verena Raby

My Dear Aunt,—You will remember my failure to establish a business-man's cinema in the City. I may have been discouraged but I was not dismayed, because I am convinced that there is still an enormous field for picture palaces and that the industry will increase rather than decay. I have now hit upon another and more practicable scheme and that is to build picture palaces just inside the great London termini. The idea came to me while waiting at Paddington the other day after just missing my train. The next train was not for two hours, and meanwhile I had nothing to do. The thing to remember is that every day crowds of people are in the same position as mine, while there are countless others with time to kill for different reasons. If a cinema theatre were adjacent, with a continuous performance, it could not but be a very popular boon and should pay handsomely. Even the staff would probably often steal a few minutes there; I don't mean the station-master, but certainly the porters, and the in-

habitants of the neighbourhood would come too.

All that is needed is to obtain permission from the various Railway Companies to erect the buildings on their premises and then collect the capital; a mere trifle would be needed, because the site would be either free, or negligibly cheap. If you agree, would you invest, say, £1000 in it?

If I do not mention Hazel it is not because I have ceased to love her, but because I have nothing to report. I wish she could be got away from her father, whose cynical influence is bad for her. Detached, she might soon come to see things more romantically and then would be my chance.—I am, yours sincerely, HORACE MUN-BROWN

LXX

RICHARD HAVEN TO VERENA RABY

MY DEAR, I am deeply interested in your desire to spend money at once, while living. Personally, I expect you do a great deal more with it than you know, or at any rate than you led me to understand. I happen to be acquainted with your character.

The question is, are you strong enough to go

into this matter?—for the best almsgiving, I take it, is that which has not been asked, but comes unexpectedly, dropping like gentle dew from a clear sky; and this needs imagination and the willingness to enter into all kinds of investigating trouble. It is in essence the very antithesis of facile cheque-writing; but so irksome, and unlocking so much distress and squalor, that most of us shy at it and reach for the cheque-book again in self-defence. My friend Pagnell, who is all logic, insists that philanthropists are of necessity busybodies, and mischievously self-indulgent ones too, and that the broken and the helpless should go to the wall. That, he holds, is Nature's plan, which meddling man disturbs and frustrates. But the English character is not sufficiently scientifically de-sentimentalized for that.

One of the things that I should like to see done with money is to reform education. This you could easily do at a very trifling cost, at once,—and have the fun of watching it go on—by endowing certain experiments in your own village. If they were successful there, their fame would be noised abroad and others would copy and gradually the seed would fructify. The smallness of

the seed never matters. The interest on a thousand pounds would do it—fifty pounds a year to an associate teacher whose duty it was to fit the children for the world they are to live in. Reading, writing and arithmetic would go on as usual, but concurrently with them there would be instruction in life: directed chiefly at the girls, who are to be the wives and mothers and home upholders of the future. If the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, the hand should be better trained. One of the first things to be taught is the amount of tea required in a tea-pot. The old story about the wealth of mustard-makers being derived from our wastefulness with their commodity is probably far more true of the wealth of tea-merchants.

The difficulty would be to find the teacher. That always is the difficulty—finding the right person to carry out one's ideas. And, imagination being the rarest quality in human nature, the difficulty is not likely to decrease. The best way would be to interest some cultured and well-to-do resident to take it on—some one like your Mrs. Carlyon—but then you would be up against the village schoolmaster, who, not having any imagi-

nation, would resent her rival influence, and so the scheme would end where so many others equally sensible have ended; in the realm where, I am told, the battles of the future are to be fought—in the air.

One of the reasons why progress is so piecemeal is that the thinkers have to delegate, whereas it is usually only the man that thought of a thing who is really capable of carrying it out. We saw enough of that in the War, where most of the muddles and scandals were the result of delegation; and most of them, for that reason, were unavoidable. R. H.

To-day's poem:—

O World, be nobler, for her sake!
If she but knew thee what thou art,
What wrongs are borne, what deeds are done
In thee, beneath thy daily sun,
Know'st thou not that her tender heart
For pain and very shame would break?
O World, be nobler, for her sake!

LXXI

Antoinette Rossiter to her Mother

Dearest Mummie,—A man has been here to cut wood and we watched him. He said that

every time the clock ticks some one dies and some one is born. He said that the best food for rabbits is Hog-weed and he is going to give us two baby rabbits. He said that jays suck pheasant's eggs. I can't remember anything else, but he is one of the nicest men who have ever been here. Oh yes, he said that when he was a boy he and the other boys used to put little teeny-weeny frogs on their tongues and make them jump down their froats, but don't be alarmed, I don't mean to try this, not till we see what happens to Cyril. Do come home soon.—Your lovingest TONY.

x x x x x

x x x

Love to Lobbie.

LXXII

ROY BARRANCE TO VERENA RABY

DEAR AUNT VERENA,—It is extraordinary how things happen for the best, and I am sure that I am being looked after by fate in some strange particular way. I never have gone in much for religion, but that there is a kind of guardian spirit

for people who behave decently I am convinced. You remember about Trixie? Well, for quite a long time I was heart-broken and couldn't enjoy food or anything. But I see now that it had to happen, it was all done for my good, because it gave me more depth and maturity so as to be ready to meet Stella on level terms.

Stella is the loveliest girl you ever saw and quite the best partner I have yet danced with, almost my own height and so extraordinarily light and supple without being too thin. She also has a tremendous sense of humour, which I consider most important in a perfect marriage. Lots of marriages, I am convinced, have gone wrong because the husband and wife had different ideas of a joke. Poor mother, for instance, never sees that father is pulling her leg, and it makes her querulous where she ought to laugh.

I wish I could bring Stella to see you. She sings divinely and can play all the latest things by ear after hearing them only once; which is, I think, a wonderful gift and makes her the life and soul of parties. She would do you a world of good. On a houseboat at Hampton last week-end she never stopped. It was smashing.

Her people are very well off, her father being on the Stock Exchange. They live at Wimbledon and have a full-sized table. Do write and send me your congratulations. I have not seen her father yet, but my idea is to make him take to me so much that he finds a place for me in his office. As there are no sons, he will probably want some one to carry on the business and I don't doubt my ability to pick up the threads very quickly. I wish it was Lloyd's, because I am told that is child's play, but I don't doubt I could cut a figure on the Stock Exchange too.

Stella has a retroussé nose and the most adorable smile. We have thousands of things in common, besides a love of dancing. She says she doesn't want an engagement ring, she would much rather have a deer-hound, so I am trying to get one. I wonder if anybody breeds them in your neighbourhood?

Father wants me to go to Oxford, just as if there had been no War, but I don't feel that I could possibly endure the restrictions there. Besides, what would Stella do? During the War she worked too, for all kinds of Charities. She was splendid. When you feel well enough, you

must let me bring her down to play and sing to you.—Your affectionate nephew, Roy

LXXIII

Verena Raby to Richard Haven

Dear Richard, — Some of your special privileges seem to be coming my way, for I am now largely occupied in writing letters of counsel, chiefly to nephews and nieces in whom the fever of love burns or does not burn. Theodore's girl is the last—so very much a child of the moment as to think that wanting a thing and having it should be synonymous. I am feeling very grateful I am not a mother and I felicitate with you on your non-paternity. Parents just now are anything but enviable. None the less. . . .

It's funny how the young people come to me for help, just as though I were a flitting Cupid instead of a weary stationary horizontal middle-aged female, whose only traffic in the emotions occurred in the dim and distant past and is for ever buried.—Good night, V.

LXXIV

Nicholas Devose to Verena Raby

My Dear Serena,—If I may call you again by that name, which to me, in spite of everything, is sacred still—I have only just had, from my sister, the news of your illness, having in this far spot few letters from home, and I write at once to say that I am deeply grieved and hope that already you are better.

If you can bring yourself to write, or to send a message by another hand, I implore you to do so. You may think it hard that it needed a serious injury to occur to you before I wrote again, but that would not necessarily convict me of callousness. I swear to you, Serena, that not a day has passed without my thinking of you—and always with the tenderest devotion to you and always with self-reproach and regret that, so largely through my fault, or, even more, my own impossible temperament, your life may have been circumscribed and rendered less happy.

I know, through various channels, certain things about your life to-day, but of course only

externals. I know, for instance, that you have not married; but whether that is because of me (as my own singleness is certainly associated with you, or rather with us), I do not know. I know by how many years you are my junior, and I am forty-nine next week. If you are conscious of loneliness and it is my influence that has kept you from marrying, I am sorry; but there are worse things than celibacy and it is probable that both of us are best suited to that state. I certainly am. The common notion that every one ought to marry is as wrong-headed as that every one ought to be an employer of labour. Very few persons are really fitted to live intimately with others; and the senseless heroic way in which the effort is made or the compromise sustained is among the chief of those human tragedies which must most entertain the ironical gods peering through the opera-glasses of Heaven.

I must not suggest too much melancholy. I don't pretend that life has nothing in it but wistful memories and regrets. On the contrary, I taste many moments of pleasure. But—even while enjoying my own somewhat anti-social na-

ture—I should, were I asked to stand as fairy godfather beside cradles, wish for no child a sufficient income to indulge impulses, nor too emphatic a desire to be sincere, nor, above all, any hypertrophied fastidiousness. In a world constructed not for units but for millions, such gifts must necessarily isolate their possessor.

When the War broke out I was in Korea. Since last we met I have been all over the world and at the present moment am in Fez. I have thousands of sketches stored away, some of which might be worth showing, but I can't bring myself to the task of selection and all the other arrangements; I can't sometimes bear the thought that anyone else should see them, so you will gather that I am very little more reasonable than of old and probably even less fitted to take a place in the daily world.

If it would be any kind of pleasure to you to see me—if I could help you in any way—you have but to let me know. I shall be in Madrid, at the Grand Hotel, till the end of next month and will do as you tell me. N. D.

LXXV

Josey Raby to Vincent Frank

Darling Vin.,—Every one is against me and therefore I must act alone. Will you be at Euston with two tickets on Saturday evening and we will be married in Scotland. It is the only way. After I am married they will all understand and be reasonable.

If you would rather fly to Scotland, let me know and I will meet you anywhere.

I have got a wedding ring.—Your devoted

J.

LXXVI

Vincent Frank to Josey Raby

[*Telegram*]

Impossible. Writing. Vincent.

LXXVII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear Verena, to return to the great money problem, I think you ought to know that the papers print particulars of the will of a Hastings innkeeper who set apart the interest on £300 for an annual supper to sixty Hastings newsboys. And a little while ago I cut from the *Times* a will in which the testator, a fellmonger and a gunner, killed during the War, left "£1000 in trust during the life of his wife to apply the income for a treat for the children of the Chelsea and District Schools, Banstead, such treat to consist of sweets, strawberries, or a visit to the pantomime, and to be in the nature of a surprise."

Well, there would be no difficulty in arranging for little things like that. All you want is a good almoner and perhaps Miss Power would take the post. And here again you could see the fun going on, which the dead cannot. At least we used to think they couldn't, but the evidence on the other side is accumulating. There is a

conspiracy afoot to make us think that the dead "carry on" too much as we do.

All you need is to ask yourself which kind of worker is least rewarded, or you are most sorry for, and go ahead. Lamb's friend, James White, would have chosen chimney-sweeps. The late landlord of the Royal Oak at Hastings would have replied "Newsboys." Miss Rhoda Broughton would reply, "Overworked horses." On my own list would occur railway porters. Also compositors. And what about the little girls who carry gentlemen's new garments all about Savile Row and the tailors' quarters—is anything done for them? And the window-cleaners—they can't have much fun. And oyster-openers—what a life! And carpet-beaters—Heavens! And the little telegraph girls, in couples, with the grubby hands. No, the list would not be hard to compile.

There are possibilities of social regeneration in it, too. Certain horrible imperfections—due to haste and false economy and a want of thoroughness—are allowed year after year to persist, to the serious impairing of the nation's nerves, which might be removed, or at any rate reduced in number, if some warm-hearted living hand, like

yours now, or wise dead hand, like yours in the distant future, were outstretched. For example, a legacy of a thousand pounds would not be thrown away if the interest on it were offered every year as a prize to the maker of chests-of-drawers which would open most easily, or the maker of looking-glasses which remained at the desired angle without having to be wedged. The details would have to be worked out, perhaps through some furniture trade paper, but what a heightening of effort and what a saving of temper might result! And if a prize were offered to the firm of haberdashers whose buttons were most securely sewn on, what a wave of comfort might be started! I bought some soft collars at a first-class shop only last week and the buttons were all loose and some of the button-holes were too small; and it was I who suffered, not the haberdasher. All he did was to spread his hands and complain about post-war carelessness; whereas he might just as well have supervised the things before they were sent home as not. One of the most infuriating things in Peace-time is the impossibility of punishing anybody—except oneself. The world is so prosperous that one can't touch

it. Once one could set a tradesman's knees shaking by merely expressing the intention of going elsewhere in future; but it is so no longer.

But this is dull reading for Herefordshire. Are not these lines on the toilet table of Marie Antoinette poignant?—

> This was her table, these her trim outspread
> Brushes and trays and porcelain cups for red;
> Here sate she, while her women tired and curled
> The most unhappy head in all the world.
>
> R. H.

LXXVIII

Vincent Frank to Josey Raby

Darling Josey,—I hated having to telegraph, but there was nothing else to do.

You know, my sweet, that part of a man's job is to look after his woman, and I can't feel that we should be playing the game to go off like this. The more I think about it the more convinced I am that your father knows what he is saying and that we ought to wait. After all, impossible though they are, fathers have got some kind of right to put their damned old trotters down now and then, and especially when one is

still eating from their hands. Besides, I don't know from day to day what I am going to do—the whole force is in such a muddle with Winston tinkering at it—and it wouldn't be playing the game to marry now. Three years isn't such a terrible long time and I may be an Air-Marshal by then, who knows? After all, we must live, and I haven't got a bean beyond my rotten pay, and if your father turns us down, where are we? Echo answers where. Especially as my people have always set their hearts on my marrying that red-headed horror I showed you in the distance at the Russian Ballet.

No, my angel darling sphinx, the sweetest thing ever made or dreamt of, let us be sensible, much as it goes against the grain, and wait. I've got my eye on an absolutely topping engagement ring in Regent Street, which shall be yours in a fortnight from to-day and we'll have the most gorgeous fun.—Your grovelling lover, VIN.

LXXIX

CLEMENCY POWER TO THE HON. MRS. POWER

DEAR MOTHER,—Things go along very comfortably here, so comfortably that I have a guilty feeling that I am not earning my salary at all, but spending a happy visit. I now have a weekly journey to Hereford to do any extra shopping that may be needed. I go in a car in state in the morning and have lunch at the Green Dragon while the things are being packed up.

We are now reading nothing but the *Times* and Thackeray. Having just finished *Esmond* we are beginning *The Virginians*. Miss Raby's father used to read it to them all and she says it brings old times back: but I should prefer a change now and then. I find that I can manage reading aloud now with much less fatigue. Don't you think girls at school ought to be trained in it?

Did I tell you that my employer, Mr. Haven, had a wonderful Solitaire board made on which Miss Raby can play while lying at full length on her back? The cards have holes in them at the

top, and are hung on instead of being laid down, as on a table. She is able to sit up better now and can use a table, but she keeps this for times when she is tired. Don't you think it is the very thing for Grannie? I think I shall get one made and send it to her.

I have even taken on a class in the school—teaching what is called daily sense. It is the idea of my employer, Mr. Haven, and consists of showing the little beggars how wrong it is, for instance, to stand on the middle of the cane seat of a chair, instead of on the wooden edges, and things like that. The schoolmaster was very ratty about it at first, but I did some of my blarneying and now he's a lamb.

It's wonderful what an effect a little brogue has on these Sassenachs. I noticed it among the soldiers in France, officers and men, and it's the same here; and I swear I never really try. But doesn't it look as if all that poor old Ireland needed to get her way was to send out an army of Norahs and Bridgets just to talk and so convince?

Mr. Haven was here the other day. He is very nice—tall, with very soft quite white hair, pre-

maturely white. He did Miss Raby a world of good.—Your dutiful truant, CLEMENTIA

LXXX

VERENA RABY TO NICHOLAS DEVOSE

DEAR,—Your letter was indeed a voice from the past—almost from the grave. It was kind of you—it was like you—to write, but I almost wish you had not. I have a long memory. Come back if you will, but do not come here without letting me first know that you are in England. But for your own sake I think you ought to return now and then and challenge criticism. It is not fair, either to yourself or to others, to bury all those beautiful pictures—for I am sure they are beautiful. You could not do anything that was not beautiful or distinguished. I am growing stronger every day and the doctors are hopeful about my being able to be active again, almost if not quite as before. Nicholas, believe this, I have no quarrel with fate, my life has been happier far than not. SERENA

LXXXI

Josey Raby to Verena Raby

My Dear Aunt V.,—This is just to tell you that it is all over. Vincent, when the time came, had no courage, so we have parted. I am now unable to eat, and expect and hope shortly to go into a decline and die. This is a world of the poorest spirit and I have no wish to continue in it. Think of me always as your loving J.

LXXXII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

Well, the Great Day has nearly passed, and Peace having now been formally celebrated we must look out for squalls. I saw the procession from a window, the owner of which—my old friend Mrs. Kershaw—is paying her rent out of the money she made by letting the rest of the rooms. The caprice which decided that the route should embrace her house she looks upon as a direct answer to prayer.

This reminds me of a true story, told me by Mrs. Northgate-Grove, of their page-boy, who has been very carefully brought up. At the local Peace sports he was entered for the 100-yard race, which, he said, would be an absolutely sure thing for him, provided the telegraph boy didn't run. On the night before Peace Day, one of the family passing his bedroom door heard him on his knees imploring Divine interference. "O God, I pray Thee that some important message may prevent the telegraph boy from being able to compete." And here's another nice prayer story. A small girl was overheard by her mother asking God to "Graciously make Rome the capital of Turkey." "But why do you pray for that, darling?" "Because that's how I put it in the examination paper to-day."

My head aches from this overture to the millennium and I wish we were a year on. We are settling down so perilously slowly. In fact, here in London you would think it a perpetual Bank Holiday, whereas never in our history ought we to have been working harder than since the Armistice. But who is to tell the people how serious it all is? The statesmen's "grave warn-

ings" and the newspapers' constant chidings equally are usually cancelled by parallel pages of incitements to frivolity and expense. England, for the greatest nation in the world, can be singularly free from *esprit de corps*.

But these are gloomy Peace-Day reflections—possibly due to the fact that it has begun to rain and the fireworks will be spoiled. I am to see them from a roof in Park Lane. I would much rather spend the evening in the bosom of some nice family and watch a baby being bathed and put to bed. That is the prettiest sight in the world; but I don't know any babies any more. Where are they all? Every one—particularly as he gets older and more disposed to saturninity—should know a baby and now and then see it being put to bed.

Well, here goes for the fireworks.—Yours,

R. H.

P.S.—Here is the poem—foreshadowing joys beyond all the dreams of Oliver Lodge:—

> Within the streams, Pausanias saith,
> That down Cocytus' valley flow,
> Girdling the grey domain of Death,
> The spectral fishes come and go;

The ghosts of trout flit to and fro.
Persephone, fulfil my wish,
And grant that in the shades below
My ghost may land the ghosts of fish!

LXXXIII

Verena Raby to Richard Haven

Dear Richard,—The Peace Celebrations here, they tell me, were very quiet. I am glad that they are over at last and we can now all begin . . .

Your long letter about the benefactions has given me plenty to think about for some days. I had not thought of the distribution of money as being so full of amusing possibilities: almost too full. I should like to do something of the kind, but to confine it to my own neighbourhood. But then one's name would be certain to leak out, and it is so dreadful to be thanked.

Meanwhile, I wonder what you will think of this idea. You remember Blanche Povey who used to live at Pangbourne? She married a doctor, a very nice man, Dr. Else, and they live at Malvern. Malvern is of course a happy hunting ground for medical men, because invalids

go there, mostly rich ones, and Dr. Else would be doing very well, only for an infirmity. The usual one—he drinks. Blanche tells me that he is getting worse, and she sees nothing but disaster, and every time he goes to a patient she fears he may have over-stepped the mark and be found out. It seems to me that if a man in his position, a really nice man, could be promised anonymously a good sum of money on the condition that he did not touch alcohol for a year, much good might be done. How does it strike you? Or am I becoming that hateful thing, a busy-body? With the best intentions, no doubt, but a busy-body none the less.—Yours, V.

LXXXIV

Roy Barrance to Verena Raby

Dear Aunt Verena,—You must not think I'm just a mere rotter when I tell you that Stella and I have parted. I know it looks silly to be in love with different girls so often, but then how is one to discover which is the real one unless one tries? Besides, at the time each is the only one. I liked Stella in many ways and I like her still, but I can see that we are not perfectly suited.

Her nature makes her pick up new friends, chiefly men, too easily. My nature is not like that—I want one and one only. Although of course all this is Greek to you, perhaps you can sympathize.

Margot is much more like me and she shares my keenness for the country. Stella hated being away from London or excitement, while Margot loves walking among the heather and all that sort of thing. She knows a fearful lot about natural history too, and only yesterday, when we were on Box Hill, she corrected me when I said "There goes a wood-pigeon" because it was really a ring-dove. Pretty good, that, for a girl!

Don't think I am flirting with her, because it would be no use as she doesn't intend ever to marry, but I find her an A.1. pal and she is teaching me lots of things and making me much more observant. You would like her, I'm sure. Her father is a retired brewer with oceans of Bradburies, who wants her to marry a cousin.—Your affectionate nephew, ROY

P.S.—By the way, I saw Josey the other night at the Ritz, with a very gay party. She is the prettiest little thing.

LXXXV

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear, your question about the tippling medico is not an easy one to answer. How could he take money if he is a man with any pride? The thing becomes a bribe, and bribes are rather offensive. It is also on the cards that what he needs to pull him together is not your money, but just the jolt which expulsion from Malvern would give him. He might then make an effort and start afresh among patients who are really ill and in need of a doctor—panel work, for example. Somehow, I don't like interference in this kind of case. There is always the chance, too, that teetotalism might make him self-righteous and injure his character in other ways, perhaps more undesirably than alcohol. That's how I feel.

On the other hand, expulsion from Malvern might be the means of sending him wholly to the devil. His self-respect would be lost and he would sink lower and lower. In this case the burden would fall chiefly on his wife, for with

the complete loss of self-respect there can come to the loser a certain peace of mind; the struggle is over; whereas she would suffer in two ways—through grief and through poverty. There's no fairness in the world. The Gods may, as Edgar says, be just in making of our pleasant vices whips to scourge us, but there is no justice in including the innocent in this castigation—as always happens.

Your best way is to be ready to do what you can for the wife.

The League of Nations continues to engage attention; but if I were building a house I should build it underground. War can never be eliminated, and it is certain in the future to be waged chiefly in the air and without warning. It is probably high time to turn our scaffold poles into spades.

I send you to-day two short poems from the East. Although written hundreds and hundreds of years ago by Chinese poets, they touch the spot to-day:—

> Sir, from my dear old home you come,
> And all its glories you can name;
> Oh, tell me,—has the winter-plum
> Yet blossomed o'er the window frame?

And this:—

You ask when I'm coming: alas! not just yet . . .
How the rain filled the pools on that night when we met!
Oh, when shall we ever snuff candles again,
And recall the glad hours of that evening of rain?

—What is the special charm of those? But they haunt me.—Good night, R. H.

LXXXVI

Verena Raby to Richard Haven

Dear Richard,—You were very good to reply so quickly about poor Blanche's husband. I wish other people were as prompt and true to their word. Dr. Else must now, I suppose, gang the gait that the stars have prescribed for him; but of course one has to remember that my interference might be also in the stellar programme.

What I think I most want is advice as to the disposition of money after I am dead. I suppose I ought to be giving it to my own needy relations while I am alive. There is poor Letitia, for one. That husband of hers does nothing to add to his pension, and I know she is in need of all kinds of things. Roy is on my mind too. Not that his

father is not well off, but fathers and sons so often fail to understand each other, and I feel sure that the boy, if helped a little, might become serious and develop into a self-supporting man. At present he seems to do nothing but fall in and out of love. I do not intend to blame him for that, but I should like to see more stability. He sends me the fullest account of his young ladies, each of whom is perfect in turn. How lovely to be young and absurd and not ashamed of inconstancy! As we grow older we acquire such stupid cautions. V.

LXXXVII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

Look here, Verena, I wish you wouldn't say fulsome things about my promptness and so forth. My promptness is sheer self-indulgence, to prevent the bore of accumulated correspondence. As for my sagacity, don't be so sure about it. You may be taken in by my brevity and the confidence of it all; and I may be utterly wrong about everything. Why not?

Meanwhile, I have to remark that either everything is in the stellar programme (as you so happily call Fate) or nothing is. If your suggested interference with the bibulous proclivities of Dr. Else is written there, so is my dissuasion of you.

If you are bent upon some form of corruption —bribing people into virtue—why not try it with the young? There's Roy, as you say, all ready to be an ass. Might not he allow his life to be regulated by the promise of "A Gift for a Good Boy"? Not long ago some rich man left his son a fortune on condition that he never approached within a certain fixed distance—several miles—of Piccadilly Circus. It got into the papers, I remember. How it can be known whether or not these conditions are observed I have no notion. I trust it does not mean ceaseless tracking by private detectives. But there is always a certain fascination about them and I wonder that dramatists have not done more with the idea. Personally I think I hate such tampering with destiny, fortunate or ill, but you must do as you wish with your own. Besides, as I said before, it is probably as much your fate to set up

obstacles to Roy's folly as it is his to be foolish. We only play at free will.

What is at the moment interesting me more than such metaphysics is the problem: Where are the scallops? Once upon a time there used to be Coquilles St. Jacques twice a week, but my faithful landlady can't get scallops anywhere in these days. Why do things suddenly disappear like this? Is it because the scallop is a cheap luxury, and the fishmonger wants to deal only in the expensive articles? Whitechapel (that very sensible country) is probably full of scallops.

Here's another Chinese poem which gives me great joy:—

Confusion overwhelming me, as in a drunken dream,
I note that Spring has fled and wander off to hill and stream;
With a friendly Buddhist priest I seek a respite from the strife
And manifold anomalies which go to make up life.

Good night, my dear, R. H.

LXXXVIII

Roy Barrance to Verena Raby

Dear Aunt Verena,—Thank you for your very kind letter, but really I don't think I am in any such danger as you seem to fear (and it's frightfully decent of you to take so much interest in me and my affairs) because I always feel that I am a kind of darling of the gods. This must sound horribly conceited, but it isn't as bad as that really. It's a kind of faith in a higher protection, and there's no harm in having that, is there? Anyhow, it keeps me from getting into anything like very serious trouble. I've just had another example of this watchfulness, and it's so wonderful that I must tell you about it.

You remember about Stella and how glad we were that it was all over with her? We shouldn't have suited each other a bit, and as a matter of fact I think she would have dragged me down. Well, after not seeing her for weeks, I ran into her in Bond Street on Monday, and before I knew where I was I'd asked her to dine at the Elysian the next day. That was yesterday. It

was foolish, I know, but she was so nice and friendly in spite of it all, and looked rather pathetic, and I always think one should be as kind as possible—in fact I learnt it from you.

Anyway, I did it, and then went off and began to regret it at once. I saw what an ass I had been to re-open friendship with her. No one should ever re-open with old flames, particularly when they haven't played the game. And a meal is particularly unwise, because there may be an extra glass of wine and then where are you? You get soft and melting and forget what you ought to remember, and all the fat is in the fire once more, and before you know where you are you are very likely engaged again. So I went about kicking myself for being so gentle and impulsive, and had a rotten night. The next day I couldn't telephone or wire to call it off, because I hadn't her address, and the wretched dinner hung over me like the sword of What's-his-name all day. Some men of course wouldn't have gone at all, but I hate breaking engagements.

But—and this is the point—I needn't have worried at all; and after such a wonderful experience of watchfulness over me I shall never

worry again—I should be a monster of ingratitude if I did. Because all the time my guardian angel was working for me. For when I had dressed and started out to get to the Elysian punctually, what do you think?—there was a cordon of police all round it, to keep me and every one away, and thousands of people looking on. The restaurant had caught fire and was gradually but surely burning to the ground! Wasn't that an extraordinary piece of luck, or rather, not luck but intervention? Of course it was no good looking for Stella among such a crowd, so I went off to the Club and dined alone.

A religious fellow would make a tract about an experience of this kind. I'm afraid I can't be called religious exactly, but I have learnt my lesson.

I am still having bad nights thinking about my future.—Your affectionate nephew, Roy

LXXXIX

Clemency Power to Patricia Power

Pat, my Angel,—I am comfortable enough here but I wish I could hail an aeroplane and

drop in on you all for a few hours. Some day we shall be able to do impulsive and impossible things like that. Miss Raby is certainly getting stronger, and could very well do her own reading, but she seems to like me. I am saving money too—because there's nothing to do with it—and when my time is finished you must come to London to meet me and I'll stand you some nice dinners and theatres before we go back.

I hope I've done the school children a little good, but it's heartbreaking to be a teacher, because one is fighting nature most of the time. "Be thoughtful, be good, be considerate," we say, by which we mean "Behave so that the comfort of older people, who own the world, may be as little disturbed as possible." But oh the little poets and rebels we are suppressing and perhaps destroying!

We're all women here, except the Doctor and the Rector, who are both old and oh so polite. The Doctor's wife, Mrs. Ferguson, is the affable arch type who tells anecdotes and is "quite sure God has a sense of humour"—you know the kind I mean. The Rector's wife is soft and clinging and full of superlative praise. But I mustn't

be critical, because every one here is kind and nice, and as for Miss Raby I'd do anything for her.

Give Herself my love and say I'll write very soon. Adela ought to write to me, tell her.—Your devoted CLEM.

XC

HORACE MUN-BROWN TO VERENA RABY

DEAR AUNT,—As you know, there is great need of a revival in all kinds of home industries if we are to regain, or rather to hold, our place among the nations, and I am far too keen a political economist not to be giving much thought to the matter. What I am at the moment most interested in is the carpet manufacture. I have heard of a firm in the West of England which merely needs a little more capital to do the most astonishing things, and I wonder if you would advance me a thousand or so to invest in it. I ask as a loan—no speculation at all.

One of the reasons why I have a leaning towards this industry—apart from the fact that

carpets must always be needed—is that the other day when I was in the South Kensington Museum, looking about for inspiration, I noticed an ancient rug, hanging on the wall, which represented a map. It at once struck me that it would be a first-class notion to make map carpets for sale in this country. Think of the enormous success that a carpet-map of the Western Front would have been during the late War. Conversation need never have faltered, and if you had a real soldier to tea or dinner he could have made his story extraordinarily vivid by walking about the room and illustrating the various positions. Or take a carpet-map of Ireland—how that would help in our understanding of the Irish question! In nurseries too, the carpet could teach geography. Children crawling over it from one country to another could get a most astonishing notion of boundaries and so forth.

The more I think of the scheme, the more I am taken by it; and I hope, dear Aunt, that you will see eye to eye with me. Trusting that you are progressing favourably towards a complete recovery—I am, your affectionate nephew,

HORACE MUN-BROWN

P.S.—I never see Hazel now, but still live in hopes.

XCI

Verena Raby to Richard Haven

My Dear Friend and Philosopher,—How wise you are! On paper. When I meet you and see your dear old face I know you are capable of quite as many incautious impulses as most of us; but when I read your cool counsels and generalizations you seem to assume a white beard of immense proportions and to be superior to all human temptations or foibles.

Now, tell me, don't you think there is any way in which a little money might help to get England back to a sense of orderliness and responsibility again? Nesta and I have been wondering if lecturers could be employed, perhaps with cinema films, to excite people about England—the idea of England as the country that ought to set a good example, that always has led and should lead again. A kind of pictorial pageant of its greatness. Or there might be illustrated lives of its greatest men, to stimulate

the ambition of the young and their parents. It is all very vague in my mind, but don't you think there is something in it? The Rector, I confess, is very cold. He says that what is needed is more faith, more piety, and anything that I could do to that end would be the best thing of all; but when I ask him how, all he can suggest is a new peal of bells here and a handsome donation to the spire fund of the church at Bournemouth where he was before he came here, which was left unfinished. Nesta says that, according to her recollection, Bournemouth has too many spires as it is. I know you are usually sarcastic about the Church, but do tell me candidly what you think.

In exchange for all yours, I must give you the last verse of a consolatory poem written for me by a young sympathizer aged nine:—

> How we watch the feeble flicker,
> Watch the face so wan!
> Day by day she groweth weaker,
> Soon she will be gone.

Apropos of children—Nesta's Lobbie said a rather nice thing the other day. There was a wonderful sunset and she went out into the

garden to see it. Then she said—"Mother, I can't think how God made the sky. I can understand His making nuts"—here she rubbed her thumb and finger together as though moulding something—"and even flowers. But the sky—no!"—Your grateful V.

XCII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear Verena, you have hurt me this time. I never thought you had it in you to do so, but you have. You tell me to tell you something "candidly." Now, when have I ever done anything else?

As for the Church, I don't think this the best time to give it spires. It is not architecturally that it needs help, and I never thought so with more conviction than when, at a State banquet the other night, to which I was bidden, I saw a Bishop in purple evening dress. He looked an astonishingly long way from Bethlehem.

As for the cinema scheme, it is ingenious and might serve; but I think I should wait a little until the present fermentation subsides. You

would never get a Picture Palace manager to put it on now, when every one is thoughtless and lavish with money and only excitement is popular. I remember seeing an Italian cinema audience go wild over a film about Mameli, who wrote their national song and joined Garibaldi; but that was just before a war—with Turkey—and not after. Before a war you can do wonders with people; but after—no. It is then that the big men are needed.

I don't often send you anything really wicked, but the temptation to-day is too great to be resisted. You are fond, I know, of those lines by T. E. Brown called "My Garden." Well, in the magazine of Dartmouth Royal Naval College some irreverent imp once wrote a parody which I can no longer keep to myself. By what right an embryonic admiral should also be a humorous poet I can't determine; but there is no logic in life. Here is his mischief:—

A garden is a loathsome thing—eh, what?
Blight, snail,
Pea-weevil,
Green-fly such a lot!
My handiest tool
Is powerless, yet the fool

(Next door) contends that slugs are not.
Not slugs! in gardens! when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have some brine;
'Tis very sure they shall not walk in mine.

—That of course is sacrilege, and I haven't the heart to add anything serious to it.

Here's a nice thing said recently by an old French general, retired, in charge of the Invalides Hospital. "Heroes—yes; a hero can be an affair of a quarter of an hour, but it takes a life-time to make an honest man."

Morpheus calls. R. H.

XCIII

Nicholas Devose to Verena Raby

My Dearest Serena,—I rejoiced to have your letter. I was afraid that you might not be well enough to write; I was afraid that you might not wish to write. I am on my way back and you shall know when I reach London. I will do as you say: you would be wiser than I. N.

XCIV

Louisa Parrish to Verena Raby

My Dear Verena,—It is too long since I wrote to you. The reason is that the trouble about maids has been so constant and distressing. I am sure that there could not be a house where more consideration is shown, but we cannot get any to stay. I don't understand it in the least. I have even offered to buy a gramophone for the kitchen, but it is useless. I brought myself to this step very reluctantly, because some of the records with what I believe is called "patter" in them are so vulgar, and too many of the songs too. Our last cook stayed only four days and vanished in the night. She seemed such a nice woman, but you never can tell, they are so deceitful. When we came down in the morning there was a note on the kitchen table and no breakfast. She had actually got out of the window after we had gone to bed.

I now have one coming from the North with an excellent character but she wants £45 a year. Isn't it monstrous? The housemaid has been here

for three weeks, but I wake several times every night and fancy I hear her making off. Life would be hardly worth living, under such circumstances, but for our friends.

I hope your news is good. My own constant ailment does not show any improvement and if only I could feel any confidence about the house I should go to Buxton. I heard from a visitor at the Vicarage yesterday of another case of spinal trouble which seems very like your own. That too was the result of a fall. It was many years ago and the poor sufferer is still helpless; but we all hope better things for you.—Your sincerely loving friend, LOUISA

P.S.—My brother Claude has had another stroke.

XCV

ANTOINETTE ROSSITER TO HER MOTHER

DEAREST MUMMIE,—I had a funny dream last night. I dreamt about you and me going to see the Queen and I had a hole in my stocking. The Queen didn't see the hole but you made me

cross by drawing attention to it and apologizing. I said to the Queen, "I suppose you never wear the same stockings again, Queen Mary," and she said, laughing, "Oh, yes, I do but you mustn't call me Queen Mary, you must call me Ma'am." Wasn't it funny?

When you come home you will find new curtains in the drawing-room which Daddy has had put up for a surprise for you. I oughtn't to have told you, but you must pretend you didn't know and be tremendously excited. My cold has gone. I used four handkerchiefs a day.—Your very loving TONY

x x x x x

XCVI

ROY BARRANCE TO VERENA RABY

DEAR AUNT VERENA,—I am feeling very run down and depressed, because my star has set. What I mean is that Margot has gone. Her people have taken a place in Scotland and of course she had to go too. As I believe I told you, she never intends to marry, but all the same she was a jolly good sort and we had some

topping walks together. We used to go to the Zoo too, and as her father is a Fellow all the keepers know her and show her the special things. Being cooped up in London is rotten and I wondered if I might come to you for a few days for some country air and perhaps cheer you up a bit. You must be very dull lying there all the time with nothing but women about you. I should be out most of the day, and I daresay there are some people to play tennis with and a golf course not too far off. Margot has been to Herefordshire and she says it's ripping, and what she doesn't know about the country isn't worth knowing. Of course if all this bores you, you'll say so, won't you?—Your affectionate nephew,

ROY

P.S.—I haven't seen Stella since that awful Elysian business.

XCVII

RICHARD HAVEN TO VERENA RABY

MY DEAR, I have to confess to a sad failure. You must know that I am always hoping for an

adventure that shall be worth narrating in a letter to you, and sometimes I even strive for them. My latest deliberate flirtation with the Goddess of Chance occurred this afternoon; and being deliberate it failed. At least there is nothing in it for the immediate and sacred purpose: but one never knows how long an arm can be.

It happened this way. I had invited Anna—you know, Fred Distyn's sister—to a matinée; and she was to meet me in the lobby five minutes before the rise of the curtain. I was there even earlier and stood waiting and watching the eager faces of the arriving audience for fully ten minutes after the play had begun. This eagerness to be inside a theatre and witness rubbish is (as you know) a terrible commentary on life and the intellectual resources of civilization; but that is beside the point.

Having waited for a quarter of an hour I then deposited with the commissionaire a minutely-painted word-portrait of Anna, together with her ticket, and took my seat.

When the first Act was over and there was still no Anna, I told the commissionaire to find

some one in the street who looked as though a theatre would amuse him—or, if need be, her—and invite him or her to occupy the empty place.

Now could one set a better trap for Fortune than that?

But it was a hopeless fiasco. Instead of playing the Haroun Al Raschid and going out into the highways and byways, the commissionaire gave the ticket to his wife, who happened to be calling on him for some of his Saturday wages. My own fault, of course, for I ought to have gone myself. One should never delegate the privileges of romance.

Here is an old favourite, for a change:—

> Jenny kissed me when we met,
> Jumping from the chair she sat in;
> Time, you thief, who love to get
> Sweets into your list, put that in!
> Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
> Say that health and wealth have missed me,
> Say I'm growing old, but add
> Jenny kissed me.

I suppose you know that the Jenny of this poem was Jane Welsh Carlyle?—Your devoted

R. H.

XCVIII

Nicholas Devose to Verena Raby

[*Telegram*]

Am at Garland's Hotel, tell me what to do.

Nicholas

XCIX

Nesta Rossiter to Roy Barrance

Dear Roy,—Aunt Verena asks me to say that she will be delighted if you will come for a few days next week, but she warns you that you will find things very slow here. We are a small party, the liveliest of us being my little Lobbie, whom I don't think you have seen. As she is now six, this shows that you have neglected your kith and kin. If you care for fishing you had better bring your rod, as the Arrow is not far off. And I wish you would go to that shop in the Haymarket just above the Haymarket Theatre and get one of those glass coffee machines—medium size. I

should also like a biggish box of Plasticine for Lobbie.—Your affectionate cousin,

NESTA

C

VERENA RABY TO NICHOLAS DEVOSE

DEAR,—I have thought much since your last letter and more still since the telegram came. Please do not come yet. I could not bear it. Old as the rest of me has become, all that appertains to you is preserved, as though in some heart-cell apart, and as fresh as yesterday. I am not equal to the emotion of seeing you just yet, nor am I sure that I want to. The you that I know is no longer the you that others see—he is young and ambitious and often masterful and yet with such strange fits of misgiving. But I should love to have a portfolio of your sketches, if you could trust them to the railway. Choose those that you think the best or that you made under the happiest conditions. No, let there be one or two when you were least happy.

Are you grey? I am. SERENA

CI

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear, I hope that this heat isn't too much for you, but perhaps your circumambient heights promote a breeze. London has been stifling. The War has certainly broken down many of our old conventions. Who, even in the hottest summer, ever before saw bathing in the Trafalgar Square fountains? Or stark naked boys careering round Gordon's statue. But I saw them to-day—a score of them—with a policeman after them; for against bathing there is a law to break, apparently. The constable did not run, he merely advanced; but they scampered before him, all gleaming in the evening sun, dragging their scanty clothes behind them, and those who were leading paused now and then to get a leg into their trousers, hesitated, failed, and were away again. It is astonishing how little space can intervene between what appears to be a sauntering policeman and a naked fleeing boy. This constable was like Fate.

I once read somewhere that clever women al-

ways tell men that they look overworked. Yesterday I made the discovery of a form of words even more soothing when proceeding from feminine lips: another weapon in the clever woman's verbal armoury—should she need any assistance that way. The solicitous phrase "You are looking overworked," is unction perhaps more for the young than the middle-aged and elderly. No young man, however conscious of his own abysmal laziness, can resist it, or want to resist it. But the maturer man—the man to whom Father Time's chief gift is an increase of girth—must be differently handled. He may be overworked, but to be told about it, however seducingly, does not much interest him. Besides he knows when it is not true: when what looks like the effect of overwork (supposing the lady to have something to go upon) is really due to late hours or a glass too many. In short, he is a little too old for any flattery but the kind of flattery he is not too old for. Therefore the clever woman, in dealing with him, must do otherwise. Taking him by the hand, she must look at his features with a close and careful scrutiny which, although it is assumed, can be extremely comforting, and then

say, in a tone almost of triumph, "You're getting thinner."

Isn't it about time that you sent me another medical report? Here is a passage in Swift's letters that I hit upon last night:—

"And remember that riches are nine parts in ten of all that is good in life, and health is the tenth; drinking coffee comes long after, and yet it is the eleventh; but without the two former, you cannot drink it right."

And here is to-day's poem:—

> If on a Spring night I went by
> And God were standing there,
> What is the prayer that I would cry
> To Him? This is the prayer:
> O Lord of Courage grave,
> O Master of this night of Spring!
> Make firm in me a heart too brave
> To ask Thee anything!

Who do you think wrote that? It is a very fine specimen of what I call "Novelists' poetry" —the poetry which men known for their prose and romance now and then produce. Most of them occasionally try their hand, and often very interestingly. One of the best short poems in the language is an epitome of the life of man by Eden Phillpotts. Grant Allen wrote some re-

markable lines. The author of *The Children of the Ghetto* has published a volume of his verses which is full of arresting things. Thomas Hardy, of course, has become poet altogether, and Maurice Hewlett seems to be that way inclined. But still I don't tell you who wrote the lines just quoted: John Galsworthy. R. H.

CII

Verena Raby to Richard Haven

My Dear Richard,—I have come to the conclusion that the immediate need is to get my will properly fixed up. If you won't accept the responsibility of distributing money according to your own judgment I must make some definite bequests. I calculate that after relations and friends and certain dependants are provided for or remembered, there ought to be as much as £50,000 to leave for some specific useful purpose. It might go to build and endow alms-houses, it might form a benevolent fund of some kind. Please concentrate on this question, even though it tends towards that pernicious evil "interference."

I am in momentary fear of losing Miss Power because her mother has been ill; but hope for the best. I don't know what we should do without her. V.

CIII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

Now, Verena, you're talking. The interest on £50,000 at five per cent, with income-tax at present rate deducted, would be, say, £1750. Well, you can do lots of things with £1750 a year.

Have you ever heard of the National Art Collections Fund? This is a society of amateurs of art who collect money in order to acquire for the nation pictures and drawings and sculptures which the nation ought not to miss but which it has no official means of purchasing. For although we have a National Gallery of the highest quality, the Treasury grant for buying new masterpieces for it is so small that, unless private enterprise assists, everything goes to America. How would you like your £1750 a year to assist the purchase

of pictures for the nation—whether hung in London or elsewhere—for ever?

And then have you ever heard of the National Trust for the Preservation of Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty? This was founded by the late Octavia Hill with the purpose of acquiring for the nation, for ever, beauty spots and open spaces and old comely buildings. Isn't that a good and humane idea? To preserve a piece of grass land, with all its trees intact, in the midst of a new building estate! All kinds of parks and commons and hill-tops are now inviolate through the activities of this Society. Would you like your money to strengthen their hands? No one with money to spare who followed Octavia Hill could go wrong.

That is enough for the present; but I will supply further hints.

You want stories, you say. Here is one which was told yesterday, at Mrs. Beldham's, by a very attractive and humorous woman. We had been talking of jewels; apropos, I think, of Lady Crowborough's pearl necklace which she took off and allowed me to hold. Nothing more exquisite than the temperature and texture of them could I

imagine; only about twenty-five thousand pounds' worth, that's all. I wonder that the psychic quality of jewels has not appealed more to novelists, for there can be no doubt that they are curiously sympathetic. Pearls in particular, which grow the finer the more constantly and intimately they are worn by congenial wearers, but which languish and decline in lustre as their wearer loses health, and worn on some necks refuse to glow and shine at all. I can see a Hawthorney kind of story in which the living pearls of a dead mistress play a subtle part.

Anyway, we were talking about precious stones, and this Mrs. Dee told us her hard case. For she is the owner of some of the most beautiful emeralds that exist in this country: the owner, but she cannot get at them. They belonged, she said, to her Aunt Emily, and it was always understood that upon the death of that estimable and ageing lady they were to descend to her. It was, indeed, in the will. And so they would have done, had not the too officious layers-out neglected to remove them from the old lady's neck.

"Gray's 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard'," said Mrs. Dee, "is a melancholy poem, but its

sadness is as nothing compared with mine, when I sit beside Aunt Emily's grave in the Finchley Road cemetery and think of all my jewels growing dim only six feet or so below me." R. H.

P.S.—Behold to-day's poem:—

Men say they know many things;
But lo! they have taken wings,
The arts and sciences,
And a thousand appliances;
The wind that blows
Is all that anybody knows.

CIV

Roy Barrance to his sister Hazel

Best of Beans,—I am having quite a good time here, after all. One of the carriage horses isn't at all a bad hack and there's some ripping country. At the end of Hargest Ridge there's an old race-course which hasn't been used for centuries, where you can gallop for miles. Aunt Verena looks perfectly fit but she has to keep still. She is awfully decent to me and really wants to set me on my feet. Why is it that Aunts and Uncles can be so much jollier and more sym-

pathetic than fond parients? One of Nesta's kids is here too—Lobbie—and we have a great rag every bed-time. Aunt Verena doesn't seem to think that I am cut out for the Diplomatic Service. Perhaps not. Personally I should prefer to manage an estate. If it comes to the worst, there's always the stage, but after the Stella incident the very thought of singing musical-comedy songs makes me shudder. There's rather a nice Irish girl here, who reads to Aunt Verena, named Clemency Power. She was in a canteen in France during the War. I never met a Clemency before. She's got a heavenly touch of brogue.

Tell me all about things and how the home-barometer reads. Is it still "Stormy"?—Yours till Hell freezes, Roy

CV

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear, with a view to getting assistance towards the solution of the great testamentary problem, I went yesterday to see Bemerton the bookseller and inquire about the literature of char-

ity (for, as that witty cleric, the late Dean Beeching, wrote:—

> It all comes out of the books I read
> And it all goes into the books I write

—or, more accurately, the letters I write, for I have never touched authorship proper) and he produced from those inexhaustible shelves a report on alms-houses and kindred endowments published in 1829 under the title *The Endowed Charities of the City of London.* This exceedingly formidable tome I am going to peruse and send you the results; and really I don't think I could do a more disinterested thing, for none of your money is coming to me, and it consists of nearly eight-hundred double-column pages of the kind of small type into which the Editor of the *Times* puts the letters of the most insignificant of his correspondents.

Bemerton, by the way, told me a very nice ghost story which, when I can find an hour or two, I am going to write out for you. It was told him by a distinguished Orientalist, and he believes it and I should like to.

There's a threat of Prohibition coming to England too, but I hope against it. There is too much

of "Thou shalt not" in the world. If people were trusted more, there would probably be less excess and folly. So far as I can gather from those who know America, one effect—and by no means a desirable one—of the dry enactment is to increase trickery and mendacity. The illicit sale of alcoholic beverages still goes on, but as it is illegal it must be done secretly and lies must be told to cover it. Personally I would rather think of a nation too convivially merry than of one systematically deceptive.

Omar should be arrayed against Prohibition at once:

> A blessing, we should use it, should we not?
> And if a curse, why then Who set it there?

—that wants some answering. All the same, there are probably more people who would be better for less drink than those who would be improved by more; but the second class exists. I have met several of them.

One of the best commentaries on abstinence by compulsion is that of Walter Raleigh, the Professor of Literature. During the War there was a movement at Oxford to prevent Freshers' Wines and keep all intoxicants out of the Colleges; and

a petition to the Vice-Chancellor to this effect was signed by a large number of persons, chiefly in Holy Orders. Walter Raleigh, however, wouldn't sign it, and this is part of the letter in which he gave his reasons:—

"I cannot think it wise to ask the resident members of the University to adopt rules drafted for them by a body of petitioners the bulk of whom are neither responsible for the discipline of the Colleges nor well acquainted with the life of the undergraduates.

"A certain amount of freedom to go wrong is essential in a University, where men are learning, not to obey, but to choose.

"Thousands of the men whose habits you censure have already died for their people and country. Virtually all have fought. Why is it, that when the greatest mystery of the Christian religion comes alive again before our eyes, so many of the authorized teachers of Christianity do not see it or understand it, but retire to the timid security of a prohibitive and negative virtue? Your petition is an insult to the men who have saved you and are saving you."

—That's pretty good, don't you think?

CVI

ANTOINETTE ROSSITER TO HER MOTHER

DEAREST MUMMY,—I hope you will come home soon. We are not having much fun, nurse is so stubbern. Topsy brought in a mole yesterday and you never saw such darling little hands as it has. Daddy has promised to have a coat made up for you if we get a thousand of them.

I wish you would write to nurse to say that I needn't have cod liver oil. A telegram would be better and I will pay you back for it out of my money box.

Uncle Hugh has sent Cyril a toy theatre and we are going to do Midsummer Night's Dream which Daddy says was by bacon. He won't tell us what he means.

When you come home you will find a surprise in the garden. I mean you will if it comes up. We have sown Welcome in mignonette in the bed under your sitting-room window but there are such lots of slugs that we can't count on it.

Daddy says that he is much more important than Aunt Verena.—Your loving TONY

x x x x x x

x x x x

CVII

NICHOLAS DEVOSE TO VERENA RABY

MY DEAREST SERENA,—I am sending a selection, and an easel with them. I suggest that you adopt the Japanese custom and change them periodically. The Japanese make each picture the King of the Wall for a week or so in turn, but I should like you to have a fresh one of my drawings on the easel every day—for the whole day. That is, of course, if you like them. I cannot tell you how happy I am to be allowed to do this. I feel that I am again in your life, but with perfect safety: vicariously, so to speak, but with the fullest fidelity too. Let some one advise me of safe arrival. I am sending you sixty picked things—so you must be well again in sixty days! But I daresay that if you did the picking you would make a totally different choice. One of the tragic things in an artist's life—and I don't mean by

artist only a painter—is the tendency of people to admire what he thinks his least worthy efforts.

N. D.

CVIII

Clemency Power to Patricia Power

Angel Pat,—I am so sorry about Herself. Of course I'll come directly, if it's necessary. I have told Miss Raby and she agrees. Let me have a telegram anyhow directly you get this. I'll tell you a secret, Pat. I have an admirer, and at any moment he may sue for my hand! Or such is my unmaidenly guess. It's this plaguey Kerry voice of mine. Every one says sweet things about it, but for this boy—Miss Raby's nephew who has been staying here—it's been too much entirely. That he will propose I feel certain and I wish he wouldn't. I was bothered enough in France, but one doesn't take War proposals seriously, especially when the men are away from their own country. But this boy is as eager as a trout stream.—Yours, Clem.

CIX

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

Dear Verena, I now send you some notes collected from the perusal of the gigantic volume on the Endowed Charities of London as they were examined by a commission early in the last century. It is a monument to the public-spirited dead. In London the benefactions run chiefly to free schools, alms-houses, subsidized sermons and doles of bread and coal—"sea coal," as it is usually called. Now and then there is an original touch, as when one Gilbert Keate gave to the parish of St. Dunstan's in the East—you know, the church with the lovely spire built on flying buttresses—"£60, to be lent gratis, yearly, during the space of four years, to three young men inhabitants of this parish (one of them to be of the Dolphin precinct), by the vestry, to each £20 on good security, by bond for repayment at four years' end, as the inhabitants in vestry should think fit."

Samuel Wilson did even better, his will, dated October 27th, 1766, containing this clause: "And

my mind and will further is, that the said sum of twenty thousand pounds, or whatever sum be so paid by my said executors to the said chamberlain, shall be and remain as a perpetual fund, to be lent to young men who have been set up one year, or not more than two years, in some trade or manufacture, in the city of London, or within three miles thereof, and can give satisfactory security for the repayment of the money so lent to them; . . . and further my mind and will is, that no part of this money shall be lent to an alehouse keeper, a distiller or vendor of distilled liquors."

That seems to me to be a very excellent disposition of money; but probably it is not in your line. The Corporation of London was appointed to manage the charity, but as a rule these rich City men left their money to their Chartered Companies for distribution. Where alms-houses, for example, are built and endowed there must obviously be some organization to carry them on; and the City Companies, who are commonly supposed to devote their time to eating and drinking, really exist largely for this admirable purpose. So do churchwardens; carrying round the plate is but a small part of their duties.

Here is a pretty compliment, to take the taste of all that away:—

> If I were a rose at your window,
> Happiest rose of its crew,
> Every blossom I bore would bend inward:
> They'd know where the sunshine grew.

A letter from an old friend making his first long voyage reaches me to-day from Aden. He says, "Why don't artists oftener paint circular pictures? Nothing could be more beautiful than the views of water and sky, and now and then of scenery or buildings, that I have been getting through my porthole. I would almost go so far as to say that round pictures are the only ones—at any rate of the open air. You should get one of the Galleries to arrange a Porthole Exhibition and start the fashion."—Good night, R. H.

P.S.—Here is the latest definition of appendicitis. "The thing you have the day before your doctor buys a Rolls-Royce."

CX

Hazel Barrance to Verena Raby

Dear Aunt Verena,—Since Roy has come back from his visit, I seem to know so much more about you. I don't mean that he tells us anything, but he answers questions. I want to thank you for your kindness to him, which was just what he was needing to pull him together, because father never has time to take any real interest in him and is impatient too. Fathers and sons so often, it seems to me, are the last people who ought to meet. Mothers and daughters can hit it off badly enough and misunderstand each other thoroughly, but I don't think there is so much real hostility between them as between those others. I don't think hostility is the word; it is a kind of rivalry, particularly as the mother usually takes the boy's side. Anyway, if you are going to be as much interested in poor old Roy as he says, I am sure he will buck up and do something worth while, because he has lots of ability and makes friends too. In fact, when it comes to the other sex he makes them too easily. His chief trouble

is that he had just enough Army life to unsettle him and not enough to give him discipline. The War came for him at the wrong time: he ought to have been younger and escaped it or older and have gone properly into it.

I was much more lucky, for I shall never regret a moment of my V.A.D. work. But I wish I could be busy again. So does nearly every girl I know. We all miss the War horribly; which sounds a callous and selfish thing to say, but isn't really. It shows, however, that there must be something very wrong with our civilization if it needs a ghastly thing like that to give thousands and thousands of girls their only chance to be useful!—Your loving HAZEL

P.S.—A hospital nurse I know said a funny thing yesterday. She said that one of the tragedies of nursing is that the officer you restore to life is so seldom the officer you want to dine out with; and another tragedy is that that is what he can't understand.

CXI

Patricia Power to Clemency Power

Dearest Clem,—Herself is herself again.

Your news is very exciting. Of course you were bound to have a proposal at Kington, because you have them everywhere. I rather like the sound of the boy. Do tell me some more about him and how you yourself feel. There seem to be no boys here, except the Luttrells and the Hills, and they are not very luscious; but there's to be a dance at Kenmare and perhaps we shall see a new face or two then. O Lord for some new faces! (The maiden's prayer.)

What about that Doctor out in France? Where does he come in? You mustn't be a heart-breaker, you know, darling.

Dilly and Dally grow in beauty day by day and go on giving amazing supplies of milk. Old Biddy Sullivan has been drinking again. Mrs. O'Connor's little girl the other day was overheard laying it down as a maxim, to her brother, that one should always tell the truth, not because it is right, but because "you can be sure your

friends will find you out." They do, don't they?
—Your loving and jealous PAT

CXII

RICHARD HAVEN TO VERENA RABY

DEAR VERENA, I return to the Charity Book. Behold the case of Peter Symonds, which may, or may not, offer suggestions. "Peter Symonds, by will, dated 4th April, 1586, gave to the parson and churchwardens of All Saints, Lombard Street, yearly, for ever, £3, 2s. 8d., to be received of the churchwardens and socialty of the Company of Mercers, to be employed by the said parson and churchwardens in manner following, viz. to pay 30s. thereof yearly, on Good Friday, to the children of Christ's Hospital, in London, on condition that the same children, or threescore of them at least, should, on the same Good Friday, in the morning, yearly, for ever, come into the said church of All Saints . . . and he directed that the said parson and churchwardens should bestow 3s. 4d. in the purchase of good raisins, which should be divided in threescore parts, in paper, and one part given to each child; and he gave 16d. of the

said £3, 2s. 8d. to the beadles of the hospital, who should come with the children."

Peter Symonds was a man, and perhaps you would rather be guided by a woman. If so, observe the example of Margaret Sharles:—

"By will, dated 2nd September, 1600, Margaret Sharles bequeathed £20 unto such a learned man as her overseers should think good, to preach every week in the year, in the parish of Christ Church . . . she also bequeathed to the vicar and churchwardens, £5 a year, to be employed for ever, towards the relief of the vicar, curate, clerk, and sexton by the discretion of the churchwardens there; she also gave unto and amongst her poor tenants within the said parish, £6 yearly, for ever, to be bestowed in manner following: £1, 6s. 8d. for a load of great coals; 16s. for a thousand billets, to be distributed amongst her said tenants, three days before Christmas, and the residue thereof to be spent upon a dinner for her said poor tenants on Christmas Day, at the sign of the Bell, in Newgate-market."

Even better, for your purpose, is the example of Jane Shank:—

"By will, dated 7th July, 1795, Mrs. Jane

Shank directed that the Painter-stainers' Company should divide the interest on her fortune into twelve equal parts, and shall apply eleven-twelfth parts thereof in payment of pensions of £10 a year, to indigent blind women, and retain the remaining twelfth part as a compensation for their trouble and expenses. Jane Shank requested that the Company would advertise for proper objects of the charity in two morning and two evening papers, three times each, as often as any vacancies should happen; and she directed that the persons to be elected should be of the age of 61 years at the least, should have been blind three years, should be widows or unmarried, and unable to maintain themselves by any employment, should be in distressed circumstances, born in England, not in Wales or Ireland, have lived three years in their present parish, have no income for life above £10 a year, never having received alms of any parish or place, never having been a common beggar, and being of sober life and conversation."

Jane, you see, was a forerunner of Sir Arthur Pearson of St. Dunstan's, who would, I am sure, have no difficulty in recommending a suitable destination for any spare funds of your own.

But I must not weary you (or myself) with these testaments.

Here is a story told me by my friend, Mrs. Torwood Leigh. Towards the end of the War she gave a party to an Officers' mess stationed in the neighbourhood, and almost every guest exceeded. The next day, when they called to return thanks, each one in turn took her aside to apologize—for another!

And here is the poem: something lighter for a change:—

I recollect a nurse called Ann
  Who carried me about the grass,
And one fine day a fair young man
  Came up and kissed the pretty lass.
She did not make the least objection,
  Thinks I "Ha ha!
  When I'm grown up I'll tell mamma."
And that's my earliest recollection.

That is a poem by a man pretending to infancy. Here is a genuine child-product, one of the lyrics of a little American girl named Hilda Conklin. Don't you think it rather beautiful?

WATER

The world turns softly
Not to spill its lakes and rivers,
The water is held in its arms

And the sky is held in the water.
What is water,
That pours silver,
And can hold the sky?

Good night, R. H.

CXIII

Verena Raby to Nicholas Devose

Dear,—They are beautiful, and so like you. I shall set them up daily, one by one, as you wish —and it is a charming idea and will make the nights so exciting, for some one else will choose them for me and it will be all a surprise! But I had to go through the whole sixty first. How could I wait? Why, I might die!

How wonderful a world it is, and how fortunate are those who can travel about and feast their eyes on it—and yet how sad you rovers must be! Especially at sunset! Some of your painted sunsets are almost more than I can bear, but what they must have been to you I can only guess. And how more than fortunate are those, like you, who can capture so much of all this beauty and preserve it for others!

None the less I don't envy the traveller. "East, west, home's best"; and yet perhaps home should rightly be where oneself is; perhaps we are too prone to surround ourselves with comforts in one spot and disregard the big world. But after lying here so long it seems as if there would be no joy in any travel to equal one brief walk round the garden.—Thank you again. SERENA.

CXIV

HORACE MUN-BROWN TO VERENA RABY

MY DEAR AUNT,—You will begin to think of me as a business man and nothing else, even although so many of my schemes have come to nothing. But I assure you I am quite human too and often think of your illness with sincere regret. If I have had bad luck with my schemes, it is due to the fact, which is no disgrace, that they are before their time. I have been, in a way, too far-sighted. I have seen the public needs too soon, before even the public is conscious of them; which commercially is a mistake. One cannot, however, change one's nature. My great distress is that I have as yet failed to convince you of my general acute-

ness, at any rate to the point of support. Without a little capital a young experimentalist can do nothing, and I have only my brains.

The project which I am now about to lay before you is, however, so different from the others, and so romantic and picturesque, that I feel sure you will be interested. It also offers chances of rich returns.

There is somewhere in Mexico a lake with which is associated a very remarkable religious ceremony. On a certain day in the year the priest of the community, accompanied by thousands of worshippers, proceeds to the shore of this lake, where, after some impressive rites, he enters the water. The others remain outside. The priest wades steadily out into the lake, the bottom of which slopes very gradually, until his head alone is visible.

(All this may sound very odd to you, but you must remember, dear Aunt, that the Mexicans are a strange race and that foreign religions can often appear grotesque to us. My informant, a very cultivated man, assures me that, in this lake business, the comic element is lacking, such is the fervour of the multitude.)

Very well then, the priest, having reached the farthest point, remains standing there while the people set to work to tear off their jewels and ornaments, which were brought for the purpose, and to fling them at him. The idea is that if the article thrown reaches him or goes beyond him, the thrower's sins are forgiven. *But the point for you and me is that whether you throw far or throw short, the jewels and ornaments fall into the water and sink.*

Now this has been going on for ages, and since it would be impious for the Mexican believers to attempt to recover any of the treasure it follows that it is there still. My plan is very simple—merely to form a small company and to drain the lake. I can give you no particulars at the moment—I have not even ascertained how big the lake is—but I am being very active about it and am already on the track of a first-class engineer. As he, however, requires a financial guarantee, I am hoping that you will see your way to invest, say, £1000 at once and perhaps more later.—I am, your affectionate nephew,

HORACE MUN-BROWN

P.S.—How interesting it would be if I could spend my honeymoon visiting the place with Hazel and making inquiries! But alas! that is probably too rosy a dream.

CXV

Antoinette Rossiter to her Mother

Darlingest Mummy,—Thank you for being such an angel about the cod liver oil. I like Ovaltine much better but Daddy says it is to make you lay eggs.

Sarah was so funny yesterday. Daddy told her to bring him last week's *Punch* from the library and she brought a much older one. When he was cross with her she said "O I never look at dates." You should have seen Daddy's face. And to-day when she was telling us about the butcher being rude to her she said "But I don't mind, I always treat him with ignorance."

Nurse's young man, Bert Urible, has been here. He has come back from Messupotamia. Cyril saw him kiss her in the kitchen. He bought us some pear drops and nurse took some of his War relics upstairs to show Daddy and Daddy sent

for him and gave him a whisky and soda. When I asked him if he had killed many Turks he said "Not half."—Your loving TONY

x x x x

x x x x

CXVI

ROY BARRANCE TO CLEMENCY POWER

DEAR MISS POWER,—I hope you won't think it awful cheek of me to write to you but you were saying the other day that you wondered if it was necessary to get a passport to go to Ireland now. I thought you would like to know that it isn't. I inquired about it at Cook's. But I hope you are not going home just yet, for I am sure my aunt can't spare you. I wish all the same that when you do go I could be there, for Ireland is one of the places I have always wanted to see, and I have always felt that the only decent thing to do is to give them Home Rule and have done with it. A fellow I know in the Air Force who came from Kerry says it is ripping.—I am, yours sincerely, ROY BARRANCE

P.S.—If you are going to Ireland and would send me a wire I would meet you and help you through London.

P. S. 2.—The evening papers are full of more Irish outrages. I don't think you ought to travel alone.

CXVII

Clemency Power to Roy Barrance

Dear Mr. Barrance,—It was very kind of you to trouble about the passport. I hope not to be leaving Miss Raby until she has really done with me, but my Mother, who lives near Kenmare, is sometimes not very well and I might be sent for and should not like to have to be delayed by red tape. Yes, Kerry is very lovely and I find myself longing for it most of the time. But I doubt if you would care for a country that is so wet. English people are so often disappointed to find only grey mists and rain. For fine weather June is the best month in our parts, but I like it all—grey mists and rain hardly less than the sunshine. Lobbie has been very naughty since you left and

goes to bed in the dumps instead of in the highest spirits. I am reading Miss Raby the loveliest Irish book—indade and it's more than that, it's a Kerry book—just now, called *Mary of the Winds*, and sometimes I am so homesick I can't go on at all at all. It's destroyed I am with the truth of it!—I am. vours sincerely,

CLEMENCY POWER

CXVIII

ROY DARRANCE TO CLEMENCY POWER

DEAR MISS POWER,—Please don't think of me as nothing but English. There's quite a lot of Irish blood in our family, some way back, and I always feel drawn to the Irish and sorry for them. As for wet weather I love it when I'm prepared for it; and I've got a topping Burberry. I got that book you mentioned, *Mary of the Winds*, but it's a little off my beat. I would give anything to hear you read it, it would be just too lovely, and better than any music. I hope you don't mind my saying that I think your ordinary voice absolutely tophole, the most ripping thing I

ever listened to. There isn't any music, not even "You're here and I'm here," to touch it. Most people have to sing to be musical, but all you need to do is to talk and it beats a concert hollow. I would love to have it on a gramophone.—I am, yours sincerely, ROY BARRANCE

CXIX

RICHARD HAVEN TO VERENA RABY

DEAR VERENA, you ought perhaps to know about the St. Ethelburga Society School, where 36 boys and 20 girls were educated, and fully re-clothed once a year—being taught reading, writing and arithmetic and the catechism, with Lewis's explanation—and all for £1400 permanent funds and occasional subscriptions and donations. But of course money was worth more then than in our reckless post-War day. For example, at the St. Bride's School 80 boys and 70 girls were educated, of whom 40 boys and 30 girls were also clothed and apprentice fees of £3 given with certain of the boys—and this on an income of £375.

I have long thought that a handbook should be compiled for the benefit of persons, like yourself, who are philanthropically disposed but don't know what to do. It might have some such title as "Philanthropic Hints to Those about to Make their Wills," or "The Inspired Testator," or "First Aid to Imaginative Bequest" or "The Prudent Lawyer Confounded" or "How to be Happy though Dead." In this book an alphabetical list would be given of the less fortunate ones of the earth and suggestions offered as to what a little money could do towards a periodic gilding of their existence. No one could compile it without the assistance of my London Charity report or similar works.

For a change let me give you a poem in prose:—

FATHER-LOVE

One hears so much of mother-love.
The phrase alone is expected to touch the very springs of emotion.
There are songs about it, set to maudlin music; there is, in America, a Mother's Day.
God knows I have no desire to bring the faintest suspicion of ridicule to such a feeling, even to such a fashion;

The stronger the bonds that unite mothers and children the better for human society;

The more we think of and cherish our mothers the better for ourselves.

We owe so much tenderness to them not merely because they gave us life, but because they are women and as such have a disproportionate burden of drudgery and endurance and grief.

All the same, why was it that when, the other evening, I saw a grey-haired father—my host—thinking himself unobserved, stroke the head of his grown-up son (a father too) and the son lay his hand on his father's with a caressing gesture for a moment, but with a slightly guilty look—why was it that something melted within me (as it never does when I watch the embraces of mothers and sons) and my eyes suddenly dimmed?

Good night, R. H.

CXX

Louisa Parrish to Verena Raby

My Dear Verena,—I have just returned from the funeral of my brother Claude, one of the most beautiful interments I was ever privileged to attend. With great forethought he had himself selected the site when the cemetery was first laid

out, choosing a spot between two lovely firs on the high ground where the view is so extensive. He always was so careful in his ways, and this is but another example of his kindly consideration for others. By the blessing of Heaven the day was fine, but the mourners were protected from the sun by the grateful shade of the trees—exactly, I feel sure, as my dear brother had planned. Now and then, when I was able to raise my eyes, there lay the wonderful panorama before me.

The funeral attracted a large concourse, Claude having been a public man held in the greatest esteem and affection, and there were few dry eyes. The coffin was very plain, for he always held that it was a waste of money to spend it lavishly on the trappings of mortality.

Forgive me if I write no more this evening, for I am tired with travelling and sad at heart. But I wanted you to hear of the success of the day. I often spoke to Claude about you.—Your truly affectionate LOUISA

CXXI

Evangeline Barrance to Verena Raby

Dear Aunt Verena,—I am sending you the second number of *The Beguiler* and we all hope it will amuse you. We also hope that no other number will be needed, not because we are tired, but because we want you to be well.—Your loving niece, Evangeline

No. 2. September, 1919

THE BEGUILER

OR

THE INVALID'S FRIEND

A Miscellany

COMPILED BY

EVANGELINE BARRANCE

ASSISTED BY A BUNCH OF FLOWERS

THE TEST

A STORY

THERE was once a girl named Philippa Barnes whose father and mother died when she was seventeen. As she was too young to be married and was very rich, she had to have a guardian, and in reply to an advertisement a number of candidates for that position came forward. They were all handsome elderly men of nearly forty, and when Philippa saw them she liked most of them a good deal, but as their references were all perfect she was puzzled how to choose. Being very fond of Shakespeare she had read *The Merchant of Venice* and she decided that she must devise a test, as Portia did, but as it would be foolish to borrow the idea of the three caskets, which most people know about, she had to invent a new one.

All the applicants for the post of guardian were told to be at her family mansion at ten o'clock in the morning, and when they were assembled Philippa sent for them one by one and told each that he must recount to her some anecdote in which he had taken part with some person of inferior position—such as a bus-conductor or a taxi-driver or a railway porter or a waiter or a char. When they had all finished Philippa made her choice, which fell upon a candidate named Barclay Pole who was not so tall as the others and not so well dressed, although his references were beyond dispute.

"But," said her old nurse, who had been standing by her side all through the interviews, "why do you choose him when there are all those handsome ones at your disposal?"

"Because," Philippa said, "he was the only one who when he told the story did not make the other person call him Sir."

Barclay Pole thus became her guardian and carried out his duties with perfect success until it was time to give her hand in marriage to Captain Knightliville of the Guards.

"HEARTEASE"

PEOPLE WHO REALLY DESERVE THE O.B.E.

II. THE POSTMAN

WHEN my brother was small he wanted to be a postman because he wanted to knock double knocks; but no one who is grown up would want it, because there is no fun in spending your life in delivering letters to other people, other people's letters are so dull.

Other people have such odd ways with their letters. Father even is cross when there is a letter for him and says "Confound the thing!—why can't they leave me alone?" But my eldest sister waits for the postman and is miserable if he doesn't bring her anything.

Some people lay their letters by their plates and go on eating. This seems to me extraordinary.

Some of our visitors who get letters say "Excuse me" before they read them, but others don't.

When I think of the postman going on for ever and

ever taking letters to other people I am convinced that he ought to have the O.B.E.

"Rose"

THE CINEMA

One of the strange things to reflect about is what people did before the cinema was invented. My father was an old man before he ever saw a moving picture and when he was a boy there were none. He does not like them now because he says he always comes away with either a headache or a flea, but I like them excessively.

I like the serious ones best, but my brother Jack wants the comic ones. He can walk like Charlie Chaplin. He likes Mutt and Jeff too. I know a girl who was photographed by a cinema man while she was at Church Parade in the Park and the next week she saw it at a Picture Palace and recognized herself.

One kind of a film is always very dull and that is the kind that shows the King shaking hands with the Lord Mayor and people coming away from football matches. It is a very curious thing but nearly always when I get into a cinema this kind of film happens at once and goes on for a long time, so that it is very often too late to stay to the end of the story-film.

I wish they would turn more books into films. A girl I know lived in Paris and saw *The Count of Monte Cristo* and it was splendid. Lots of books would make good films. The other day we all said what books we would most like to see on the movies. Two girls came to tea and one said *The Black Tulip* and the other *Little Women*. Jack wanted *Twenty Thousand Leagues un-*

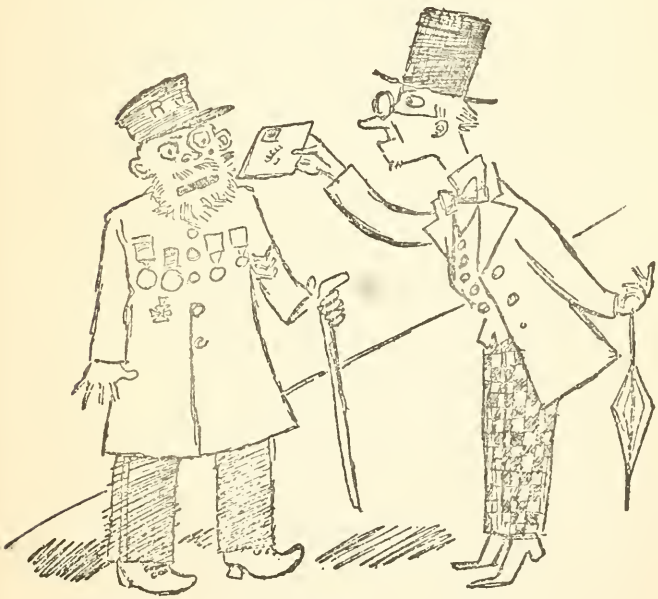
der the Sea and I think one of Mrs. Nesbit's books like *The Enchanted Castle* would be splendid.

One thing that I don't like about the movies is that they give you too much time to read the short sentences in.

It is funny how a high wind always blows in American drawing-rooms in the cinema.

M.P.s when you see them on the movies going to the opening of Parliament always walk too fast.

"DANDELION"



UNFORTUNATE MISUNDERSTANDING NEAR CHELSEA HOSPITAL

HISTORICAL RHYMES

II. LINES ON THE LANDING OF KING JOHN AFTER A CERTAIN TRAGIC EVENT

"Long live the King" the people cried
And cheered with all their might.
They crowded to the vessel's side
To see King John alight.

"Will he be clad in gold and silk?
The children, wondering, said.
"Yes, and in ermine, white as milk
With gold upon his head."

"Will he wear gems about his neck
And hold a sceptre rare?"
"Yes, when he stands upon the deck
You'll see them flashing fair."

But lo! whose is that skimpy form
All bare and shivering?
Whose are those thin and naked legs?
It is—great Heavens!—the King!

Why doth he cower beneath a sack,
As cold as lemon-squash?
The regal panoply, alack,
Is missing in the Wash.

"PANSY"

A VISIT TO THE ZOO

Last Saturday we all went to the Zoo. There were no lion or tiger cubs, but we went behind the cages in the reptile house and the keeper showed us some baby crocodiles and let us hold one. It had the funniest little teeth like a tiny saw, and a white throat which it can close up in the water, and a film comes over its eyes when it likes just like the shutter of a Brownie. The keeper said it was a few months old but would very likely live to be a hundred.

Then he hooked a boa constrictor out of its cage and asked us to hold it. I was frightened at first but after Jack and the others had held it I tried. Its body feels terribly strong and electric and all the time it is coiling about and darting out a little forked tongue. I was very glad when the keeper took it away.

We saw the diving birds being fed in their tank. There are two of them, one in a cage at each end, and the keeper throws little live fish into the tank and lets out one bird at a time. At first we were very sorry for the poor little fish, which swim about frantically in all directions to escape from the terrible great bird who dashes after them like a cruel submarine; but after a while we began to want the bird not to miss any. Isn't that funny? And my brother Jack got so excited that he pointed out to the bird where one of the little fish was hiding and cried out "Here he is, look, down here! Look, in the corner!"

"Convolvulus"

A FABLE

THERE was once a garden path paved with flat stones, and in between the stones were little tufts of thyme and other herbs.

On each side of the path were beds full of gay flowers, among which was a very vain geranium, who, when no one was about, used to mock the thyme because it was in such an exposed spot and liable to be walked on.

"The proper place for plants," the geranium said, "is in a bed where they are safe from people's feet and are treated with respect. Look at me!"

"Yes," said the thyme, "but the more I am trampled on the sweeter I become and the more the lady who planted me likes me. Haven't you seen her squeezing me with her beautiful hands and then inhaling my fragrance, whereas if anything hits you you are done for for ever."

And at that moment a tennis ball, struck out of the court near by, fell on the geranium and broke it in two.

The moral is that every one has his own place in life and we should mind our own business.

"CARNATION"

CORRESPONDENCE

I

To the Editor of THE BEGUILER

DEAR MADAM,—You ask me to tell you what is the most depressing thing I ever heard. It was this. I was crossing the Channel on a rough day, feeling more miserable than I can describe and clinging to my deck-chair because I knew that to move would be fatal, when two young men passed me, in rude health and spirits, both smoking large pipes, and I heard one say, "Personally, I've got no use for a smooth sea." I can conceive of nothing more offensively depressing than this.

Hoping you can find a place for the "anecdote" in your bright little periodical,—I am yours faithfully,

HECTOR BARRANCE

II

To the Editor of THE BEGUILER

DEAR MADAM,—I am glad to hear that you approved of my contribution to your last number. Being still unable to write, I again send you something copied from the works of another. It is a poem by Joyce Kilmer, a young American killed in the war.

Believe me, your admiring subscriber,

RICHARD HAVEN
x His mark

TREES

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

CXXII

Verena Raby to Evangeline Barrance

My Dear Editor,—Having read your second number I feel so much better that I am confident —to my distress—that a third will not be needed. And yet I should so much like to read many more. I have been moved to become a poet myself and write you a testimonial. After hours of thought in the watches of the night I produced this couplet, which even though it is not worthy to stand beside Pansy's historical ballads is sincere:—

> There was once a successful *Beguiler*
> Which turned a sad dame to a smiler.

You are at liberty to quote these lines in all your advertisements,—I am, yours sincerely,

Constant Reader

CXXIII

Verena Raby to Richard Haven

Dear Richard,—I am rather upset by a piece of news this morning. Dr. Ferguson came in to say that he is going away next week for a month's

holiday, and I can quite believe that he needs one, for I alone must have been a great source of anxiety to him—but it was rather a shock. He went on to say that he has found a very good *locum;* but none the less I am terrified. I can't bear the thought of a stranger.

Forgive this peevishness, but I am so tired of being helpless.—Yours, V.

CXXIV

NESTA ROSSITER TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR "UNCLE,"—Aunt Verena has got it into her head that the *locum* who is coming next week to take Dr. Ferguson's place will not understand her case and she is working herself into a fret over it. Dr. Ferguson assures me that he wouldn't allow anyone to take his place who is not qualified in every way, and he says too that Aunt Verena ought for every reason to be placid. Do please write to her to help soothe her down again.—Yours sincerely, NESTA.

CXXV

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

Dearest Verena, I quite understand your nervousness about this new doctor, but I think you should be more of a gambler over it all. You should be more trustful of your star. which, though it (to my mind, very reprehensively), allowed you to have a horrid fall, has made things as comfortable as possible since. Until I hear to the contrary I intend to think of the new doctor as a godsend, and a very agreeable change to old Ferguson, who struck me as a prosy dog. Be an optimist, my dear.

The more I think of your money and your character, the more I incline towards alms-houses, which, in a human non-Nietzschean country like ours, I consider to be among the most satisfactory forms of sheer benevolence. But I am not wholly convinced, and I should hate to see the interest on £50,000 going in any way astray. Meanwhile I have made notes on the alms-houses in this book. But what perplexes me is that these benevolent people wait till they are dead. It would be far

more fun to have alms-houses while one was alive and watch them at work.

Here is an essay on the death of an imaginary grandmother which little Mary Landseer has produced. The death of one's grandmother had been set, by an almost too whimsical instructress, as the subject of a composition:—

"One day, I think it was the hapiest day in the world for me. My Granmother died and left me £50. Without waiting to morn or wait for her funral I was walking along Oxford St. in surch of things to buy. My heart was as light as a feather as I walked and my boots were up in the ere.

"First I thought of what my Husband would like me to have, then with a suden thought I turned my steps home-would, and that night I went to a play, the next a nother, and so I went on till I had only 10s. left. Then how I wished my other Granmother was died, but it was no good. And when I had children I wished I had not been so rash as to spend it on abusments, but had saved it, but it was gone for ever and my other Granmother never died, to my grat misfortune."

It was Mary's father who wrote that exquisite thing to a Vicereine in India. "I wash your feet with my hair," he said at the end of a letter, employing an Indian phrase of courtesy, adding, "It is true that I have very little hair, but then you have very little feet."

Behold the punctual poem:—

> There is a flower I wish to wear,
> But not until first worn by you—
> Heartsease—of all earth's flowers most rare;
> Bring it; and bring enough for two.

Good night, R. H.

CXXVI

Emily Goodyer to Nesta Rossiter

Dear Madam,—This is to let you know with my respects that the children are quite well and happy. The puppy which Mr. Hawkes gave them takes up a deal of their time and Miss Tony is busy collecting flowers for a prize which her uncle has offered her. Master Cyril is not biting his nails so much since I tried the bitter aloes.

I am sorry to have to incommode you, but I wish to give a month's notice, not through any fault that I have to find with the place, which

has always been most comfortable and considerate, but because Mr. Urible has now come back from Mesopotamia and been demobbed and he wants to be married at once. I should have preferred to walk out a little longer, as I feel I should like to know more of Bert now he has been in the Army, as soldiers can be so different from greengrocers, which is the way I used to know him before the War, but he is very firm about it and I don't feel that I have the right, after being engaged so long, to refuse. That is why dear Madam I have to give notice and not through any complaint or dissatisfaction.

I am very sorry for it, because I am very fond of the children and I know that it is difficult to find nursemaids now, but Mr. Urible is so firm that I can't do anything else. I think you would like to know that he has grown much broader while in the Army and is a far finer figure of a man than he was when he joined up. He has two medals.—I am, with respect, your faithful servant,

EMILY GOODYER

CXXVII

Nesta Rossiter to Emily Goodyer

Dear Emily,—Your letter came as a surprise: not because I was not expecting you some day to marry, but because I was trusting to you to keep everything at Combehurst going until Miss Raby was well enough to spare me. Believe me that I am very glad that you have Urible safely back again, but without wanting for a moment to interfere with your plans I do most earnestly wish that you could postpone your wedding for a few weeks. Having waited so long would not Urible —and you—be willing to wait a little longer? Would not you? You have been such a comfort to us for so long, being so trustworthy and understanding, that I am distracted when I think of finding anyone else, especially in these times. Miss Raby still needs me constantly and I cannot bear to abandon her now. May I think of you as being prepared to stay another three months? —I am, yours sincerely, Nesta Rossiter

CXXVIII

Emily Goodyer to Nesta Rossiter

Dear Madam,—I have read your letter several times and I have shown it to Mr. Urible. We both feel the same about it; we feel that we have waited long enough, especially Bert with all the dreadful things in Mesopotamia to put up with, the thermometer sometimes being over 120 and sometimes below freezing in a few hours. But we want to do what is right and what Mr. Urible suggests with his respects to you Madam is that we should be married as soon as possible, as arranged, but that, until you come back in three months or before, I should continue to be the children's nurse by day. Mr. Urible is taking over Parsons's shop and garden in the village and we should live there. There are three nice rooms and a good kitchen and scullery, and no doubt a neighbour will cook Bert's meals for him. Dear Madam we are very wishful to oblige you but Mr. Urible feels that after all he has been through in

Mesopotamia it isn't right that he should be kept waiting any longer.—I am, yours respectfully,

EMILY GOODYER

CXXIX

HERBERT URIBLE TO NESTA ROSSITER

DEAR MADAM, MRS. ROSSITER,—Pray excuse me writing but I wish you to understand my position with regard to Miss Goodyer, who has been a good nurse to your children. It is not as selfish as you think. Miss Goodyer and I were to have married four years ago but then came the conscription and it was impossible. While I was away she promised to marry me directly there was Peace, but I couldn't get demobbed till a little while ago, which means further delay, and now she says that you have asked her to put me off again. Pray pardon me, dear madam, but I don't think this is fair of you, or that it shows the right feeling for a soldier who comes out of the War a good deal worse off than he went in. While I have been away fighting for my country my business has gone to other people and now I am asked to wait longer for my wife. Pardon me,

madam, but I don't think it is fair. A man has his feelings and rights.

Awaiting your reply,—I am, yours respectfully,

HERBERT URIBLE

CXXX

NESTA ROSSITER TO HERBERT URIBLE

DEAR MR. URIBLE,—I quite understand and agree. Perhaps you could lend me Mrs. Urible by day just a little while until Miss Raby is well. That would be very kind of you.

I hope that you and Emily will be very happy. —Yours sincerely, NESTA ROSSITER

CXXXI

NESTA ROSSITER TO HAZEL BARRANCE

DEAR HAZEL,—I am in a bother over our nice faithful Emily, who wants to be married but is willing to go on looking after the children by day until I can leave Aunt Verena. I don't care about that kind of arrangement very much; a nurse with a husband living near by is a nurse spoiled, I should guess; but it is better than nothing. As,

however, the children might need things in the night, I am hoping you can find me a new nurse at once. You are always so clever. I wrote to our regular Registry Office, of course, but they tell me that there isn't anything on their books at the moment. Could you possibly go round to some of the other places?—Yours distractedly. NESTA.

CXXXII

VERENA RABY TO RICHARD HAVEN

DEAR RICHARD,—I am prepared to wear a white sheet and eat humble pie, great slices of it and a second helping. The terrible *locum* arrived this morning and I like him and feel that he is clever and to be trusted. His name is Field and he is young, not more than twenty-six I should say. He is a Bart's man, like Dr. Ferguson, and has been in France, doing exce'lent work.—Yours,

V.

CXXXIII

HAZEL BARRANCE TO NESTA ROSSITER

YOU simpleton, thinking you can get a nurse in Peace-time. There isn't such a thing in the

world—not under £50 a year. How silly we all were not to take a leaf out of the Darlings' book and train Newfoundland dogs!—only they would have to be muzzled to-day. If I were you I should let your Emily have her way—it's only for a few weeks—and make Fred do more. Surely if the children want anything in the night, he could get it.—Yours always, HAZEL

P.S.—Father is rejoicing in a séance story which was told him at the Club. Communication was at last set up with the spirit of an old Ceylon judge whose life had been by no means one of restraint. All that he would say to the medium was, "I'm a dashed sight more comfortable than I ever expected to be."

CXXXIV

NESTA ROSSITER TO HAZEL BARRANCE

O FOOLISH virgin, how little you know of men, or at any rate of Fred! Once he is asleep no noise in this world can wake him, and as for getting things, he can get nothing. He is a pet, but no one ever took such advantage of that aloof-

ness from domestic co-operation which so many men consider their right. In his attitude to the children he is a mixture of a connoisseur and a comedian. He is either admiring them—against backgrounds, æsthetically, as though they were porcelain or almond blossom, or physically, as though they were prize puppies—or he is using them as foils for his jokes. It is all very delightful and we are a happy family, but it makes me smile when you suggest that he could take the place of Emily in any capacity whatever. Children, he thinks, should be both seen and heard, which shows that he is a modern enough parent, but they should be seen only when they are picturesque and heard only when they are gay. This being so, please go on trying to find a nurse. There is always one leaving. Every day hundreds of children must grow out of nurses.—
Yours, NESTA

CXXXV

BRYAN FIELD TO CLEMENCY POWER
[*By hand*]

DEAR MISS POWER,—I must confess that I had hoped to get to Herefordshire, but no more. The rest is Chance, dear beautiful Chance.

And how did I discover that you were here too? I saw you in the garden from Miss Raby's window and asked. Please send me a word of pardon. I should never try to influence Destiny.—I am, yours sincerely, BRYAN FIELD

CXXXVI

CLEMENCY POWER TO BRYAN FIELD
[*By hand*]

DEAR MR. FIELD,—I am glad that Herefordshire is so small and that the long arm of coincidence has not shortened. I am even more glad that it is you who are to take care of Miss Raby. —I am, yours sincerely,

CLEMENCY POWER

CXXXVII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear, I have no posthumous activities to recommend to-day, having just returned from a temple consecrated to youth, where, but for its antiquity and its Roll of Honour, no one would think of death. I mean Winchester.

My sister's boy is there and I went down for the day to see him: a nice candid jolly boy.

I came to the conclusion that there is a charm about an old public school greater than that of a university. The boy is more engaging than the youth: he may have "side" and affectation among his contemporaries, but with a much older man such as I am he is himself in a way that the undergraduate seldom is. The undergraduate's whole desire is so often to be taken for a man, whereas the schoolboy at most would like to approximate to an undergraduate.

Of all the schools that I know none is so attractive as this. Its age, its traditions, its beauty, alone would single it out: but I am taken with its spirit too. When I go to see Dick I naturally

meet many of his school-fellows; and I find a candour and friendliness which is a strange contrast to the social reserves of boys from other schools I could name. I don't know whether the whole school is similarly fortunate, but in Dick's house there is a door-opening, door-closing and passing-the-salt tendency which I fancy is often bad form elsewhere. To talk with the immature man is never easy, wherever you find him, and my inclination would always be to jump the gulf that is fixed between real childhood and real manhood; but Dick's companions are easier.

Nephews and uncles go through strange vicissitudes. At first the uncle is an imposing creature who appears but rarely and when he does must be treated with respect and called Uncle on every occasion. And then as the boy grows older and understands the powers and possibilities of half-crowns the uncle takes on a god-like mien. And then, older still, he meets him on more equal terms; which get more and more equal until the time comes when he discovers that this once remarkable person is nothing but a fogey and a bore. Some uncles, before this last stage is reached, attach themselves to their nephews as

satellites or boon companions and vie with them in youthfulness, but I am not likely ever to do that.

The relations of son and father have somewhat similar stages, but there is as a rule too close a tie there to permit of the half-contemptuous easy terms on which nephew and uncle often rub along. Dick is a good boy and should do well. I watched him this afternoon longing to hit out but knowing that the game demanded self-repression, and admired him and saw earnest of sound citizenship in it.

The next thing is to make sure he gets into my dear Bannister's College at Cambridge.

But, Verena, how glorious to be a boy! And yet how comforting, now and then, to be old enough to be useful to the young—when they will let us!—Good night, R. H.

The poem:—

> Why do our joys depart
> For cares to seize the heart?
> I know not. Nature says,
> Obey; and man obeys.
> I see, and know not why
> Thorns live and roses die.
>
> W. S. LANDOR

CXXXVIII

Hazel Barrance to Nesta Rossiter

My Dear Nesta,—I have had a brain-wave. Why should not I go down to Combehurst until you are free again and sleep near the children and let Emily go on attending to them by day, as she suggests, and keep an eye on her? I am willing to. This would also liberate Fred for his Dormy House, whither he could lug his clubs with a clear conscience. If you accept this offer, don't overwhelm me with gratitude, because I shall be pleasing myself more than anything else, this abode being at the moment a most suitable one to leave.

Father's sarcasms have had very high velocity of late. He said this morning, for example, apropos of a very harmless young man who brought me back from the theatre and whom I was foolish enough to ask in for a whisky and soda, that if girls looked at men with the eyes of men the world would come to an end, because there would be no marriages. I replied that I supposed the effect would not be far different if

men looked at women with the eyes of women; which he would of course have himself included if he was not eager to score off me. Not that this young man had any more designs on me than the rest of his sex. (I don't count Horace.) Never was a girl so unembarrassed by suitors as I or more willing to be so. But it is part of father's humour to pretend that I hunt them and that I catch only the most detrimental. How he would behave if I really got engaged I often wonder. Probably he would play the game.

Write as soon as you can—or telegraph if you like.—Yours, HAZEL

CXXXIX

NESTA ROSSITER TO HAZEL BARRANCE

DARLING HAZEL,—You are an angel to come to the rescue like this and I accept gladly. Fred will be so much relieved too, and I am sure he deserves his holiday.—Yours, NESTA

P.S.—Quite a lot of young men have, from time to time, been seen in the neighbourhood.

CXL

NESTA ROSSITER TO LADY SANDYS

DEAR AGATHA,—My cousin Hazel Barrance is going to look after the children and Emily—who, as you probably know, is about to marry Urible—until I come back. (Fred is off to his golf.) It is very sporting of her and I want you to see that she has a little amusement. She plays tennis too well and pretends to hate men, so everything is easy for you. I long to get back again. Kiss your fat Barbara for me.—Yours, NESTA

CXLI

LADY SANDYS TO NESTA ROSSITER

DEAR NESTA,—I will do what I can for your cousin. Jack is bringing several of his friends down for a home-made lawn-tennis tournament next week-end; and that will be a start. Two or three of the Wimbledon tournament players will be among them, we hope.

Your Tony and Cyril were here yesterday, and in consequence the garden hasn't a single trace of fruit left.—Yours, AGATHA

CXLII

Roy Barrance to Clemency Power

Dear Miss Power,—Please don't be angry with this letter, but I can't help writing it. I can't think of anything but you, and above all the London traffic, even the motor buses and the W.D. lorries, I hear the music of your lovely Irish voice. I want to say that I worship you and if you care the least little bit about me I am yours at your feet to do as you like with. I haven't been much of a success so far, but with you to help me and order me about I could do anything. Aunt Verena is buying me a share in a new concern directly, and I am sure she would adore it if you were her niece, though only by marriage. Don't answer this at once, but give me the benefit of thinking me over from every point of view. Of course you may be engaged already, or you may actively dislike me, and in this case I must ask you to forgive me for writing, but I couldn't help it. If you could see yourself and hear yourself

speak you would understand why.—Your abject admirer, ROY BARRANCE

P.S.—Please answer at once and put me out of my misery.

CXLIII

ROY BARRANCE TO CLEMENCY POWER

[*Telegram*]

Don't reply to letter am coming by afternoon train.

CXLIV

SEPTIMUS TRIBE TO VERENA RABY

MY DEAR SISTER,—It is seldom enough that we hear from you direct, but news gets into circulation in very curious ways and it was the oddest chance which informed me that you may be losing the services of Nesta as a companion during your very regrettable indisposition. Letitia is so much stronger than she was, thanks to the nourishing delicacies which the strictest economy in my own personal needs has made it possible for

me to obtain for her, that she is now perfectly fitted to be at your side—where, being your sister, she ought to be—and I hereby offer our services. I say "our" for she would not care to come alone, and I could, I am convinced, be useful and stimulating in very many ways. I am not surprised that Nesta should be leaving you. If the stories that I hear of the wildness of those unmothered children of hers are true, it is more than time that she returned to her home. A mother's first duty is to her brood. The ties uniting aunt and niece are of, comparatively, negligible slenderness. Where there is, as alas! in your case, no husband, a sister has the first claim to nourish and protect. Awaiting your reply,—I am, your affectionate brother-in-law,

SEPTIMUS TRIBE

CXLV

NESTA ROSSITER TO SEPTIMUS TRIBE

DEAR UNCLE SEPTIMUS,—You will be pleased to know that I have arranged to stay on with Aunt Verena. Please give my love to Aunt Letitia.—Yours sincerely, NESTA

CXLVI

ROY BARRANCE TO HIS SISTER HAZEL

DARLING HAZEL, OLD THING,—Wish me luck because I am starting out on the biggest enterprise of my life. What a pity we are not Roman Catholics and then you could burn candles for me. I am going down to Aunt Verena's to propose to Clemency Power, that divine Irish girl. I wrote to her last night but I'm such a rotten letter-writer that I'm going down to see her in person and learn my fate. I even tried to get the letter back, but postmen are so rottenly honest. I waited for hours in the rain for the pillar-box to be emptied and offered him two pounds and an old overcoat, but all he did was to threaten to call a policeman. If she accepts me I shall be the luckiest man on earth and there's nothing I shan't be able to do. You'll see. But if she turns me down I don't know what will happen. I shall probably become a film-actor in broken-hearted stories. Lots of people have said I have the right kind of mobile face for the movies, and really there's nothing *infra dig* in it. Clemency is two or three years

older than I am, but I think that's all to the good. What I need is a steadying hand. You will adore her.—Yours ever, Roy

CXLVII

Roy Barrance to his sister Hazel

Darling Old Thing,—It is no good. I am down and out. The whole thing has been a failure. To begin with, I had a hell of a journey, full of hopes and fears alternately. In the taxi at Paddington I felt full of buck and then while waiting for the train to start I knew I was a goner. At Reading I began to have hopes again and at Swindon I wasn't worth two-pence-halfpenny. At Newport I nearly got out and came back and at Hereford I had a big whisky and soda and was confident once more. But all the way from the station to the house I just sweated.

The very first thing I saw as I came up the drive was Clemency playing tennis with the new Doctor, and my heart sank like a U boat into my socks. I knew in my bones that everything was up; and I was right. Whether or not Clemency is booked, I don't know, but she won't have me.

She was as nice as she could be, and her voice drove me frantic every time she spoke, but she held out no hope. I expect the sawbones will get her, he's the kind of quiet, assured, efficient card that a flighty blighter like me would never have a chance against. And he's nobbled the whole place. Aunt Verena thinks he's It.

I stuck it for two days and then I made an excuse and came away. And now, what do you think I'm doing? I'm a railway porter. I carry people's luggage at Paddington and tell them when the train starts for Thingumbob—if ever it does—and what time the train comes in from Stick-in-the-mud. I was going to Ireland to fish and try to forget—Clemency told me of a place called Curragh Lake—but the strike came and put the lid on that for the moment. The joke is that the old ladies all want to know what lord I am—as the papers have given them the idea that at Paddington there are only noblemen helping.—Your broken-hearted ROY

CXLVIII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear Verena, I think that we may all feel happier than we were doing. Even if Old England stands not quite where she did, the bull-dog breed is not extinct. The way in which the nation has taken the railway trouble, and the lightning efficiency of the food distributing arrangements, should put dismay into enemy hearts —and under the word enemy I include Allies and rivals—and renew our own individual and corporate ambition and national spirit. In that way the Strike may be said to have been a blessing in disguise, although industrially it has been a calamity. It may also make people look a little more narrowly at their pence, which is what we shall all have to do before long.

The oddest things happened, not the least of which I heard of yesterday, when one of the few K.C.'s whom it is my privilege to know showed me on his watch chain the shilling which had been given him, in his capacity as a porter at Victoria,

by his butcher, all unconscious of his identity, as a tip for helping with the family luggage on their return from the South Coast. The K.C. said nothing at the time, except Thank you, but when things are a little quieter he is going to show it to his purveyor of indifferent Peace-time joints and enjoy a good laugh with him.

I have been wondering if alms-houses for the rich are not more important than for the poor. On all sides I hear of old widowed ladies who, needing homes, or companions, spend their time in visiting one married daughter or married son after another, when they would be far happier in a little colony like Hampton Court. Couldn't you do something for them? But you would have to be very careful. If any suspicion of charity got about, the whole scheme would fail. So you could not put them together, even in the most exquisite little garden-village homes. They would have to be isolated. At what point in the social scale a necessitous old lady ceases to be willing to have her necessity known, I cannot say; but certainly those who suffer most from it would least like it published.

Old gentlemen don't mind becoming Brothers

of the Charterhouse, but what about their Sisters? I doubt it.

Only therefore by the exercise of great secrecy could you benefit them.

And have you ever thought of the men who are tossed up and down all day and all night on light-ships? To keep others safe. What a life and what opportunities to the philanthropist!

Here is the poem, which, I trust, is not too sad:—

You come not, as aforetime, to the headstone every day,
And I, who died, I do not chide because, my friend, you play;
Only, in playing, think of him who once was kind and dear,
And if you see a beauteous thing, just say, he is not here.

Always "*à votre service*," as the nice French officials say in the South, R. H.

CXLIX

Hazel Barrance to Nesta Rossiter

My Dear Nesta,—You needn't worry about things here. They are going very smoothly. Lit-

tle stomach-aches and trifles like that; nothing more.

I had an unexpected and not too welcome visitor yesterday in the somewhat Gothic shape of Horace Mun-Brown, who had discovered from Evangeline where I was. He stayed to lunch—*your* food and drink—and talked exclusively of himself and his creative brain, both of which he again laid at my feet. I suppose some men like the sensation of being turned down, but I feel somehow that I should hate it. I mean as a habit—and by the same person. Perhaps the shock to Horace's egoism is a kind of stimulant and he goes off and is more creative than ever. At any rate he went away with his absurd head high in the air and what is called a confident tread, and this morning came a long letter about his latest scheme, which is to run a theatre called The Polyglot for plays in foreign languages, in order to get the patronage of the various foreign residents in London. One week a Greek play, for the Greek colony, then an Italian, for the Italian, then a Russian, then an American, and so forth. But he can carry this fatiguing project through successfully only if he has my wifely co-operation

and, I suppose, the necessary capital. But it is the wifely co-operation that he insists upon and that I most cordially resent.

Mrs. Urible is now more punctual and does not leave so early.

Poor Roy has just written to me about his broken heart. O that Irish syren! But his heart mends very quickly.

I am bidden to tennis at Lady Sandys' on Sunday. Some real Wimbledon men who have engaged in mixed doubles with the marvellous Lenglen. This is too exciting.—Yours,

HAZEL

CL

RICHARD HAVEN TO VERENA RABY

Now I am going to tell you the ghost story that the distinguished Orientalist told Bemerton and Bemerton told me. I shall tell it as though I myself were the owner of the fatal jewel—for that is the *motif*.

We begin with the Indian Mutiny, when a British soldier broke into a temple and wrenched the jewel from the forehead of a god. This jewel

passed into the hands of my grandfather and then my father and gradually reached me. It was of a remarkable beauty—a huge ruby—but beyond keeping it in a box in the dining-room and showing it occasionally to guests, I gave little thought to my new possession.

Neither my grandfather nor father had been too prosperous, and from the moment the stone became mine I began to experience reverses—not very serious, but continuous. It was a long time before I suspected any connection between these little calamities and the jewel, but gradually I began to do so. One evening I received a shock. Several people were dining with me and suddenly the servant put a piece of paper in my hand on which one of the guests had written "Am I dreaming, or is there really a Hindoo sitting on the floor behind you? Nobody else seems to notice him." On my asking him about it afterwards he said that the Hindoo was scrabbling on the ground as though digging a hole with his nails and that he had a very malignant expression. From time to time two or three other people, all unaware of the legend, wondered if there was not a figure of this kind in the room, and I began to get nervous.

I told the story to a friend who knows more about India than any one living. "I should get rid of that stone," he said. "It's dangerous. But you must be quit of it scientifically."

I must take it, he told me, to one of the Thames bridges and throw it into the river at dead low tide.

With the assistance of the almanack we ascertained the exact moment and I dropped it over. Then I went home with a light heart.

Three months later a man called to see me. He knew, he said, that I was interested in Oriental curiosities and he had a very remarkable one to show me. A ruby. It had been dredged up from the Thames and he had heard of the workman who had found it and had bought it and now gave me the first offer. It was, of course, *the* stone. Well, I recognize fate when I meet it, and I bought it back. Kismet.

But although I was willing still to own it, if such was the notion of destiny, I was against keeping it at home any more. So I procured a metal box and wrapped up the jewel and sealed it and locked the box and sealed that and deposited it at my Bank in the City, where it was

placed in one of the strong rooms. That was only a little while ago.

Last week I had occasion to visit the bank to consult the manager on some point of business. After we had finished we chatted awhile. Looking round at the girls at the desks—all called in to take the place of the male clerks who had gone to the War, and many of them kept on,—I asked him how they compared in efficiency with the men.

He said that generally they were not so good. They were not so steady and were liable to nerves and fancies.

"For example," he said, "it's impossible to get some of them to go to the strong room at all, because they say there is a horrible little Hindoo squatting there and scrabbling on the floor."

* * * *

There is no news and here is the poem. You must recover very quickly now, under the Paragon's treatment, because the supply of verses is running short:—

Oh, Cynicism, let them bleat and sigh,
Their own hearts hard, belike, and chill as stone;
Give me the soul that's tinged with irony,
For then I know that it has felt and known.

CLI

Patricia Power to Her Sister Clemency

Dearest Clem,—We have had a visit from your young friend, who is a great lark. He is coming again. Indeed I believe that if Herself had asked him to stay he would be here for ever. He thinks there is no country like Ireland and no part of it like Kerry; which is true enough. We are very much obliged to you, I'm sure, for sending a male thing to this nunnery.

Herself wants to know if readers to invalid ladies never get a week's holiday. She pretends to want to see you. Mr. Barrance says that he doubts if you can get away before her regular doctor returns. Don't forget us.—Your devoted

Pat

CLII

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

Dear Verena, one final word about your money. I have, I think, a really good suggestion at last; at any rate it is one which I myself, in

your position, should follow. Not only as a valuable gift, but as a well merited stroke of criticism, it would be a fine thing if you were to leave the money to the Prime Minister of the day, not for his own use but to increase the paltry £1200 which is all the money for new Civil List pensions that this great nation can find every year. Every year the number of claimants for its miserable little doles is far in excess of those that can be helped, and the help is therefore of the most meagre, and often, I should guess, useless kind. A pension of £50 a year to the widow of this eminent but unfortunate man, £70 to the daughter of that, and so forth—always "In consideration of his distinguished services to Science, Literature, Art or to his country" and of "the necessitous circumstances" of those whom he has left behind. If some of these fifties could be turned into hundreds it would be an act of benevolence indeed. What do you say? Alms-houses are excellent, but somehow I feel that this is better.

Little Mrs. Peters amused me yesterday with one of her remarks. Speaking of the impending visit of her sister-in-law, she said, "I want to

give her a decent lunch but I don't want to appear well off. Don't you think an old partridge stewed is the thing?"

Here is the poem:—

> We wagered, she for sunshine, I for rain,
> And I should hint sharp practice if I dared;
> For was not she beforehand sure to gain
> Who made the sunshine we together shared?

Meanwhile there is every sign of the coming winter here. Falling leaves everywhere.—Good night, R. H.

CLIII

Verena Raby to Richard Haven

Dearest Richard,—Forgive me for not answering sooner, but serious things have been happening.

I am entirely with you about the Civil List. I cannot believe that the superfluity of the estate could be devoted to any better purpose and I am arranging it at once. But there is not the urgency that there was, because *I'm going to get better*. Mr. Field found something pressing somewhere and removed it and I am already able to

stand. Think of that! He says that all I need now is to get some bracing change of air and lose the weakness that comes of lying down so long. And to think that once I was grumbling to you about his coming here at all! We never recognise, until after, the messengers of the friendly gods. It is really a kind of miracle and I'm so sorry about dear old Dr. Ferguson, who was always, although the kindest thing on earth, a little gloomy and pessimistic about me, and who will, although pleased—because his heart is gold—be also a little displeased, by the younger man's triumph—because his heart is human as well. That is all, to-day, but when I tell you that I am writing this at my desk in my bedroom—the first letter to any one under such novel and wonderful conditions—you have got to be very happy and drink my health. And now I half want not to get well because I shall miss all my kind friends' kindnesses and solicitous little acts.—Your very grateful V.

P.S.—You must not any longer be at the pains of writing to me so often, and I cannot allow you to be at the expense of Clemency any more.

I am now (alas!) independent of all these kind amenities; and my dear Nesta goes home to-morrow. I have kept her too long from her home. I shall feel lost indeed, and am wondering if health is worth such a breakup.

CLIV

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

[*Telegram*]

Although it is forty shillings a bottle I drink champagne to-night.

CLV

Richard Haven to Verena Raby

My Dear, the news is terrific and I sent you a telegram at once. I am rejoiced, and yet—what is to become of me now? I had formed habits of talking to you every day which I greatly prized and now they are to be broken. The young doctor is certainly a gift from heaven and I should like his permanent address. As to Miss Power, I have not any intention of giving her the sack

but if she sends in her resignation I must accept it. I think, however, that you make a mistake in demobilizing the staff so rapidly. These things are best done by gradations and I, for one, intend to remain on duty for some little while yet. I hear so many things that have only half their flavour until they are passed on to you. You will therefore oblige me by issuing a reprieve in so far as my poor pen is concerned and allow it to continue in your service. The moral seems to be: When one is really ill, present one's regular doctor with a fishing rod.—Yours ever, R. H.

P.S.—I was writing about "Father-Love" the other day; and now here are some lines of a small boy in praise of his mother, which recall the day of Solomon. The last line—after so many exalted attempts!—is very sweet?

MY MOTHER

My mother stood in the candlelight,
With a red rose in her hair,
And another at her throat.

Her face is delicately molded,
With coal black eyes that seem
To smolder, like fire far into the night.

Her cheeks are a gorgeous red,
  Her lips curved in a smile
That seem like the morning dawn itself.

Her neck is soft and slim
  Like a swan floating down o'er the river.
I love her, for she is my mother
  And I love no other.

She shares my joys and sorrows, my mother—
  Her heart is kind and true,
Her hair is black and glassey,
  I can't describe my mother's beauty.

EDWARD BLACK.

CLVI

ANTOINETTE ROSSITER TO VERENA RABY

DEAR AUNT VERENE,—Mother asks me to write to say that she has got home safely. It is heavenly to have her here again. I am so glad you are getting well. Hazel is going to stay with us a little longer. She has a friend at Lady Sandys' who is a champion tennis player. He is teaching us to juggle. He can keep four balls in the air at once and lay down and get up with a croquet mallet balanced on his forehead. He is very nice. He calls us his pupils and we are named Apter and Aptest. Cyril is Apter and I

am Aptest. Lobbie is to be taught too and her name at present is Apt. Emily comes to us every day. She is now Mrs. Urible and she usually brings vegetables. Hazel's friend sings too and Hazel plays for him and we all dance. He is teaching us the Highland fling. He says I have light fantastic toes. Hazel is teaching him hesitation which he never knew before. Mother is fatter. She says it is because she has not had us to worry her, but as she has had Lobbie it must be your nice things to eat. It is lovely and enchanting to have her back. I am so glad you are well again.—Your loving TONY

CLVII

SINCLAIR FERGUSON TO VERENA RABY

DEAR MISS RABY,—I rejoiced to have Mr. Field's very favourable report—surprisingly favourable—even though it reflects a little on my own want of intuition and skill. But I will not develop that theme, for I too was once young and cleverer than my elders, and yesterday I caught a twenty-one lb. salmon and the divine glow still warms me and makes me tolerant to all men.

Seriously, my dear friend, this news of your sudden improvement has relieved me profoundly, for it has been a constant grief to me to see you so helpless and to be able to do so little.

It is as Field's *locum*, so far as your own case is concerned, that I shall consider myself when I return, which will be in about three weeks. I wonder if he has left me anything in the place to do? I quite expect to find that old Withers has grown another leg.—I am, yours sincerely,

SINCLAIR FERGUSON

CLVIII

VERENA RABY TO SINCLAIR FERGUSON

MY DEAR DOCTOR,—Thank you for your very kind letter, so very like you. Both Mr. Field and I agree that probably the pressure was something new, a development which could not be foreseen. I would not change my doctor for any one, and though I am delighted to think of him happy in the Highlands catching mammoth fish, I hope he will soon return.

Old friends are best.—Yours sincerely,

VERENA RABY

CLIX

Louisa Parrish to Verena Raby

My Dear Verena,—I was both surprised and delighted to receive your great news. It removed a heavy burden from my mind, for it has been a grief all these months to think of you lying there. To be frank, I never expected you to leave your bed again, and have often said so, and even now I am fearful that there may be danger of a relapse. There are such things as false recoveries. But I shall hope for the best. I was embroidering a counterpane for you with "Resignation" on it (a favourite word with my dear mother) but I shall not go on with it.—Yours always affectionately, Louisa

CLX

Evangeline Barrance to Verena Raby

The editor of *The Beguiler, or The Invalid's Friend* presents her compliments to Miss Raby and begs to announce that the last number was the last. Hurrah!

CLXI

Bryan Field to Sir Smithfield Mark

Dear Sir Smithfield,—You have played, all unknowingly, such a leading part in my recent life that I must tell you the latest development. When you arranged for me to take over Dr. Ferguson's patients at Kington, you did not expect that one of the inmates of Miss Raby's house was the same Irish girl whom I found working in the French village where the hospital was situated to which—through your influence—I was appointed. Having done so much, although unconsciously, to throw these two people together again, you will be prepared to hear that they—that is to say, we—are now engaged to be married. My gratitude to you cannot be expressed in words. Believe me, yours sincerely. Bryan Field.

CLXII

Sir Smithfield Mark to Bryan Field

My Dear Field,—I appear to be a very remarkable and meddlesome person, and your case

is yet another reminder of how dangerous it is to be a human being. However, I cannot consider that any harm, but much the reverse, has been done this time; although your letter has made me nervous!

Seriously, my young friend, I congratulate you with all my heart and wish for you a full measure of professional success and domestic happiness. If there is anything at any time that I can do for you, let me know; or, no, on second thoughts don't let me know—there is clearly no need to! I am, yours sincerely, SMITHFIELD MARK

P.S.—Don't talk about gratitude. Go on making remarkable cures, for the honour of Bart's. That would be far more pleasing to me than any words.

CLXIII

RICHARD HAVEN TO CLEMENCY POWER

MY DEAR MISS POWER, I enclose a cheque to settle our little account, and if you notice a discrepancy between the amount which you thought was owing and that for which it is made out you

must devote the difference to the purchase of a wedding present for Mrs. Bryan Field, who has been such a boon and a blessing in the house of my friend. I shall never cease to be thankful that it was you who accepted the post, for I cannot conceive that even this great world could provide anyone else half so desirable.

May you be very happy with your brilliant husband, and live long, and see him rise from honour to honour. I am glad you are going to marry so soon, because then he will be able to play cricket with his sons.—I am, yours sincerely,

RICHARD HAVEN

CLXIV

HORACE MUN-BROWN TO VERENA RABY

DEAR AUNT,—The news of Hazel's engagement has prostrated me and also filled me with a kind of despair about life in general. That a lawn-tennis player should, for a permanency, be preferred to a man of ideas is so essentially wrong that one is left gasping. Lawn-tennis is a frivolous capering game for a few fine days in sum-

mer and then not again till next year, while ideas go on for ever.

Now that you are so much better again, you will probably be intent upon spending your superfluity in your own way, but I want you to listen to one more project of mine. It will show you too how my mind has been working. You know the old joke about men going out fishing or shooting and expecting to bring trout or game back to their wives, but, through want of sport, having to stop at the fishmonger's or poulterer's on their way home? Well, it suddenly occurred to me while I was shaving yesterday that here is the germ of a very successful business. You know how every traveller promises his family or his friends that he will bring back something. If he is going to the East, he generally promises a parrot or a shawl or a string of amber beads. If he is going to Africa, he promises, say, ostrich feathers or assegais. But in any case he promises something and—this is the point—probably forgets, and therefore comes back empty-handed and is in consequence despised. Now, my idea is that great emporiums should be stocked and opened somewhere near the points of disembarkation from

abroad. The ships from foreign parts disgorge their passengers at Liverpool or Southampton or London, and I should establish a great bazaar close to the harbour at each spot where everything that had been promised and forgotten could be purchased—parrots, shawls, beads, ostrich feathers, assegais, everything. The returning traveller would see it, his face would brighten, he would dash in and buy and be no longer ashamed or afraid to meet his wife. Don't you think that a good notion?

All that is needed is a clever fellow—an ex-P. & O. officer, say, who knows the world and travellers' ways—to be put in control, and enough capital to give the show a real start, and the result would be easy. Would you not care to invest? —I am, yours sincerely,

HORACE MUN-BROWN

CLXV

ROY BARRANCE TO HIS SISTER HAZEL

BLOW the cymbals, bang the fife, I'm so bucked I don't know what to do. I'm engaged to the sweetest creature you ever saw or dreamed of—

Clemency's sister Pat. You see, Clemency gave me a letter of introduction to her people, and the fish took such a dislike to me that one day I got a car and went over to see them. They've got a jolly place not far from Kenmare—the post office is at Sneem—and the old lady, who's not old at all and no end of a sport, and her two other daughters, Patricia and Adela, live there, all among little cows and chickens and bamboos and tropical plants. You see, the Gulf Stream comes in here and makes delicate things grow like the very devil. Clemency is a peach, but you should see Pat, and, even more, you should hear her! Clemency's voice laid me out flat enough, but Pat's is even more disastrous, begorra! You should hear her say "I will" where you and I and other dull English people would say "Yes," or "I will not" when we should say "No," or "I won't." The word "will" as she says it is like something on a lovely flute. She's younger than I am too. I think a husband should be older than his wife. Clemency was just the other side, you know. Anyway, she has said "I will" to me, and the old lady is agreeable provided I can show some signs of responsibility and so I am bucketing back on

Sunday to begin work in earnest and be worthy of her.

It's wonderful how everything works out for you when you let it. I go cold when I think of how awful it would be to marry Clemency and then meet this angel-pet. I should probably have seen her first as a bridesmaid, and then—but it won't bear thinking about. The Fates sent Field down to Kington just in time. I am coming back next week to go seriously into this motor transport affair that Aunt Verena is helping to finance for me, and as soon as it gets started I'll begin to arrange to marry. No man is worth a damn till he's married. With Pat to help I could do what that old Greek johnny was going to do with a fulcrum or something—move the earth. Cheerio!—Yours,

ROY.

P.S.—Why don't you find some decent fellow, Hazel? There's nothing like it.

CLXVI

VERENA RABY TO NICHOLAS DEVOSE

I WANT you to know that I am going to get well. The new temporary doctor here has done

wonders and I can even totter beside the flower beds again. It is too much yet to realize, but it is true.—Your friend, SERENA.

CLXVII

NICHOLAS DEVOSE TO VERENA RABY

[*Telegram*]

I am so glad. May I come to see you?

N. D.

CLXVIII

VERENA RABY TO NICHOLAS DEVOSE

DEAR NICO,—No, please, do not come. After all the years that have passed, and the eight months and more that I have been thinking doubly —having so little else to do and believing that life was over—you must not re-enter my heart. It is sealed against you—at least so long as you keep away. How I should feel if I saw you, I cannot say; but I daren't experiment, nor must you ask. You were to have given me so much; you took so much; you even, I confess, still hold so much—how dare I then see you, and even more, how dare

I let you see me? You could never bear the thought of age, of life's inevitable decline. So many artists cannot: it is part of the price they pay for their gifts—and no small price too, for it makes them a little inhuman and to be inhuman in this strange wonderful world is terrible. No, dear, do not come or again suggest it. My Nicholas Devose must be as dead as your Serena. The two who would now meet are strangers and they will be wise to remain so. But my Nicholas —I have him here and shall never forget him, and over him I often cry a little.—Your friend,

SERENA.

CLXIX

SEPTIMUS TRIBE TO VERENA RABY

DEAR VERENA,—Your letter of good news to my poor Letitia has made us extravagantly happy —or at least it would have done so had any form of extravagance not become impossible. I am not in the habit of criticising those in authority; I think it a bad habit to which the facile grumblers, who form a large majority in this country generally, and particularly in towns such as this,

where most of the residents live on pensions or fixed incomes, are too prone. None the less, I cannot conceal my chagrin and surprise that the Government cannot do more towards lowering the cost of living. Our weekly bills become more formidable every week, without any apparent reason. Why, for example, should a remote war in Europe increase the price of butter and eggs? The cows were not belligerents; there were no casualties in the poultry yards. As for coal, I am in despair, and the thought that your poor sister may be without the comfort of fires this winter fills me with a profound melancholy.

I wonder if you could get your friend Mr. Haven to help me to some task. I know him to be an influential person and I know myself to be capable. Although over age—not in fact but through a ridiculous rule of the Civil Service—and therefore disqualified to continue my labours for my country, I am still sound in mind and body. Indeed my intellect was never brighter, as many of my Tunbridge Wells friends with whom I am in the habit of discussing public affairs every day, would, I flatter myself, assure you. There is I believe a new public function-

ary called a Censor of Films. I feel that I could be very useful in such a capacity, if what is needed is a man of all-round sagacity and some imagination. But I would leave the nature of the post to your friend.

Such a task might bring in enough extra revenue to make all the difference to poor Letitia's life.

Meanwhile I rejoice in your recovery, trusting fervently that there is nothing illusory about it. Unhappily I have known cases of spinal trouble improving only to return with more severity; but I intend to fight against harbouring such fears for you. Letitia would send her love but she is engaged at the moment in making a fair copy of an address which I am to deliver at our Social Circle on the credibility of present evidence on the persistence of our daily life's routine after death. It is a labour of love to her, which is fortunate as I cannot afford an amanuensis.

I am,

Your affectionate brother,

SEPTIMUS TRIBE.

P. S. I wonder if you would care to have my address set up as a pamphlet for private distribu-

tion. Although I am its author, I feel at liberty to say without presumption that it is a very thorough presentation of the case both for and against, and every one is interested in such speculations just now. There is a most worthy little printer near the Pantiles who deserves encouragement.

CLXX

Horace Mun-Brown to Verena Raby

(*Two months later*)

Dear Aunt,—I am deeply gratified to hear that your recovery is complete and that you have all your old and beneficial activity again.

After so long and costly an illness I am sure that, wealthy as you are, you would not, in these very expensive times, wish to lose any opportunity of adding to your fortune; and such an opportunity now occurs. You have heard of the paper shortage? Owing to the war only a small proportion of the paper needed for journals and magazines and books is now being made. The problem then is, how to supply the deficiency? And it is here that my scheme comes in.

If new paper cannot be manufactured from wood pulp—owing to the scarcity of labour in the forests—it must be made in other ways. Now the best of these is from old paper. Now this can be done satisfactorily only if the printed words on it can be removed; in other words (to be for a moment scientific) it must be "de-inked." De-inking is a mysterious business, but Sybil, who took a course of chemistry at Newnham, has hit on a process which cannot fail. She has tried it in the kithen of her flat with an old copy of the *Nineteenth Century and After* and found it perfect. Our plan then is to buy up thousands and thousands of the largest papers, such as the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Queen* and the *Field*—the paper for each copy of which now probably costs more than the price it is sold for (this discrepancy being made possible by the wealth of advertisements)—de-ink them and sell the new paper at a considerable profit. All that is needed is the capital for the erection of the de-inking plant. Speed is of course imperative. If you are interested—and this cannot fail—please telegraph.

Ever since the day when I first met Sybil in the

Egyptian Room at the British Museum my life has been a whirl of joy and intellectual stimulus. We are both convinced that we lived and loved before, in a previous existence, and Sybil even goes so far as to believe that as ancient Egyptians we were instrumental in overcoming a papyrus shortage in the days of the Ptolemies. Personally I think this a little fanciful, but it might be true. Who can say? And women have wonderful intuition.

We both long to be united. Lack of pence is our only obstacle.

Please telegraph, dear Aunt Verena, to

Yours sincerely,

HORACE MUN-BROWN.

CLXXI

WALTER RABY TO HIS SISTER VERENA

(Six Months Later)

DEAR OLD GIRL,—I was surprised to have your long letter. You seem to have been having a pretty thin time, but I hope you're all right by now. We have some fine cattle coming along. Keep fit, it's the only way. Yours ever,

 WALTER.

INDEX TO POETRY

	PAGE
Binyon, Laurence	128
Blake, William	66
Browne, William	56
Burns, Robert	57
Colman, George	62
Conklin, Hilda	200
Cory, William	253
De La Mare, Walter	89
Fitzgerald, Edward	42
Galsworthy, John	178
Giles, A. H.	152, 156
Herrick, Robert	57
Hodgson, Ralph	77
Hunt, Leigh	173
Jonson, Ben	56
Kilmer, Joyce	221
Landor, W. S.	62, 229, 241
Lang, Andrew	147
Locker-Lampson, Frederick	200
Lowell, J. R.	193, 261
Lucas, Winifred	41
Lytton, Robert, Lord	103
Nichols, Bowyer	140, 258
Regnier, the Abbé	62
Stevenson, R. L.	57, 62
Thoreau, H. D.	183

PR
6023
A24 V4

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Santa Barbara

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW.

Series 9482

A2E
190

3 1205 02113 6583

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A A 001 431 461 1